



"I DID IT TO PROTECT MY COUNTRY" BATTLE OF BRITAIN ACE

# HISTORY *of* WAR

## SCOURGE OF THE INCAS

SPAIN'S CONQUEST OF THE NEW WORLD

**THE BLACK DUKE**  
GERMAN HERO OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS



# 1917

# AMERICA GOES TO WAR

**PLUS:**

- Frontline surgery
- Battle of Spion Kop
- Medal of Honor hero

HOW THE PLEDGE OF 'AMERICA FIRST' WAS BETRAYED IN THE CARNAGE OF THE WESTERN FRONT



**MYANMAR IN CHAOS**

FROM CRAZED DICTATORSHIP TO DESTRUCTIVE INSURGENCY



**SECOND BOER WAR**

HOW GUERRILLA MILITIAS TOOK ON THE MIGHT OF AN EMPIRE



**BATTLE OF COURTRAI**

UNCOVER THE FRENZIED MELEE OF THE FLANDERS REBELLION



**CHIEFTAIN MK10**

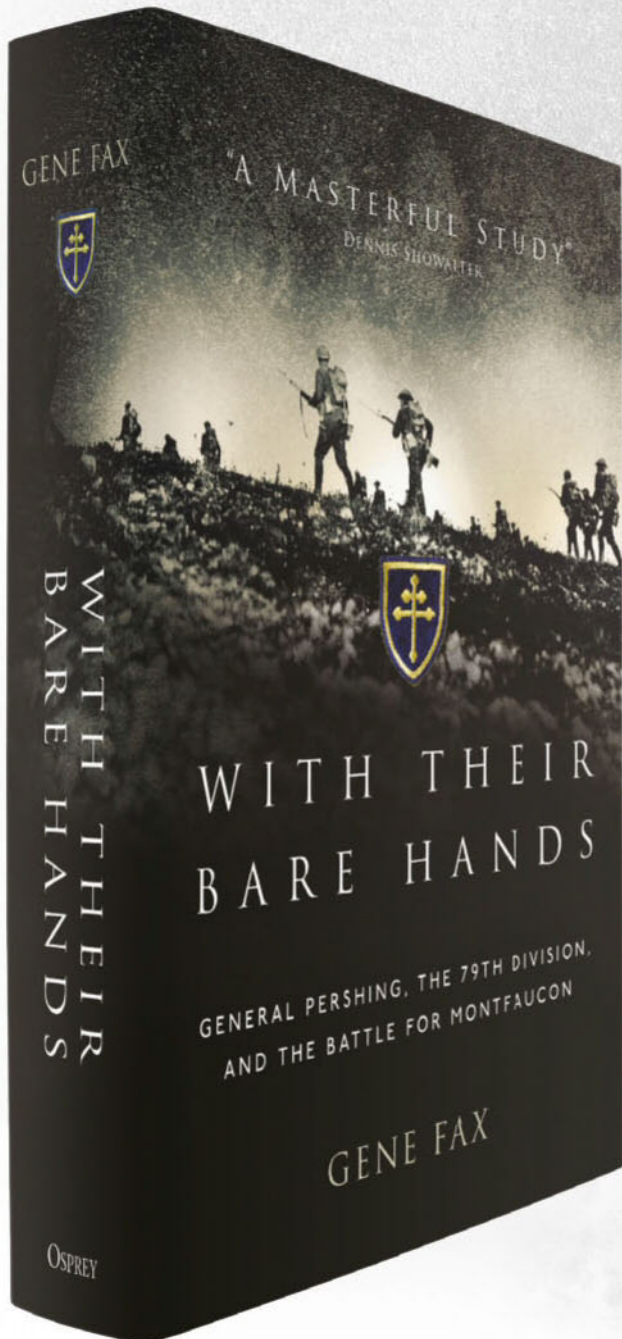
INSIDE THE UK'S WORLD-BEATING MAIN BATTLE TANK

Future

ISSUE 039

Digital Edition

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# WITH THEIR BARE HANDS

A ground-breaking narrative history, which examines the never-before-told story of one of the most devastating battles of American involvement in World War I – the battle of Montfaucon.

“Fax tells the amazing story of how the American Expeditionary Force and the 79th Division overcame many errors and false ideas and paid a high price learning how to fight effectively.”

*Brigadier General (ret.) Robert A. Doughty*

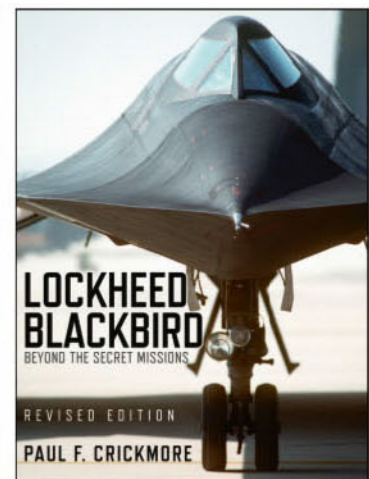
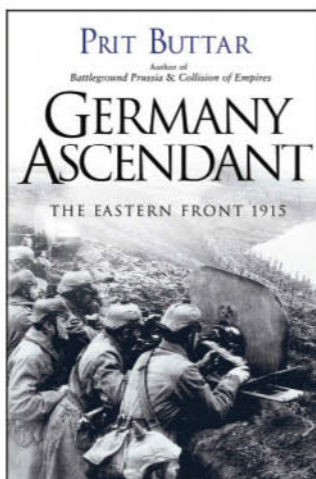
“With Their Bare Hands is a fine testament to their courage under fire and a compelling work of history by Gene Fax”

*Mitchell Yockelson, author and military historian*

“Gene Fax’s new history of the 79th Division is a masterful study of the long and difficult road to victory.”

*Dennis Showalter, author of Instrument of War*

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# Welcome

**“The day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured”**

– President Woodrow Wilson, 2 April, 1917

**N**ot long ago I was sifting through issues of *The War Illustrated*, Britain’s weekly magazine produced during WWI and WWII. The profundity of reading a publication 100 years old was not lost on me, so I’m delighted that one of those issues has now inspired this publication, a century later.

In 1917, the USA finally broke its neutrality and entered WWI – a major event for the country and the world. In June that year, *The War Illustrated*’s cover featured an unnamed Texan volunteering in France, who upon hearing the news his country was at war, unfurled ‘Old Glory’ and charged

the enemy trenches at Vimy Ridge. This issue is dedicated to him and all those brave Americans who fought and died so far from home.



*Tim*

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## CONTRIBUTORS



**TOM GARNER**

This month Tom sat down with pilot ace Wing Commander Paul Farnes, who reveals his experiences of combat during the Battle of Britain, as well as why the Hurricane was the superior aircraft (page 28).



**MARC DESANTIS**

For those with an interest in all things brutal and Medieval, Marc takes you back to the pivotal Battle of the Golden Spurs, where sturdy Flemish rebels faced off against heavily armoured French knights (page 38).



**MIKE HASKE**

Commemorating the centenary of the USA’s entry into WWI, Mike takes a look at the journey from isolation to armed action, as well as the stories of the first Americans to fight on the Western Front (page 46).

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American soldiers take aim with a 37mm M1916 gun, which was deployed to counter enemy machine-gun nests





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This clash pitched a compromised British force against well-prepared Boer guerrillas

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**WAR**<sub>in</sub>  
**FOCUS**  
**TOTAL WAR**

*Taken: 12 February 1987*

A young Iranian boy stands to attention in front of a group of parading female volunteers at a rally in Tehran. Lasting from 1980-88, the Iran-Iraq War famously featured tactics and technology that were more reminiscent of the Great War, including mass infantry trenches and even chemical weapons.









# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## FLOGGER WRECK

*Taken: c. May 2011*

The burnt-out shell of a MiG-23, code-name 'Flogger', lies on a Libyan runway after a NATO air strike. Despite being decades out of date, the Flogger was still widely deployed by the Libyan Air Force and posed a real threat to forces opposing Muammar Gaddafi's government before the NATO-enforced No Fly Zone.

# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## SCREAMING EAGLES IN THE LZ

*Taken: 8 June 1968*

Soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division deploy from a Huey while on operations north west of Dak To, South Vietnam. Among the most prestigious divisions in the US Army, the 101st had existed in one form or another since WWI, but during the Vietnam war was re-designated as an airmobile division to reflect the change in infantry tactics prompted by the conflict.







**WAR**  
in  
**FOCUS**

## HEAVY FLAK AT SKY ROCK

*Taken: 23 November 1942*

An anti-aircraft gun opens fire during a night-time raid on Helsinki, Taivaskallio Park – which translates into English as Sky Rock, or White Rock. Though Finland's capital largely escaped the heavy air raids experienced by other major European cities, in 1944 it suffered severe damage during what became known as the Great Raids.

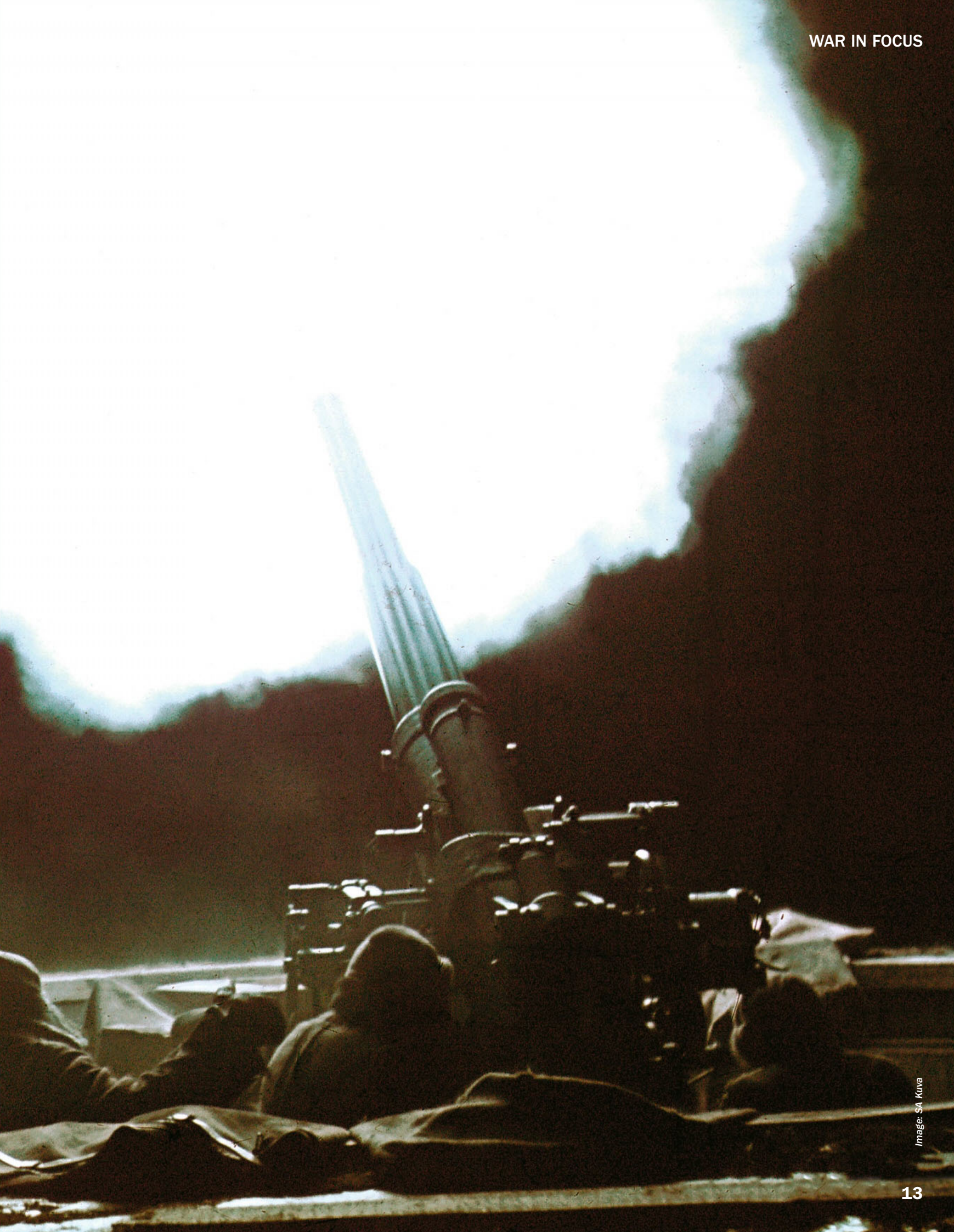


Image: SA Kuva

TIMELINE OF THE...

# SECOND BOER WAR

1899-1902



The British Empire's attempt to annex the Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State led to imperial humiliations and the death of tens of thousands of people

## 'BLACK WEEK'

The British suffered three embarrassing defeats in less than a week. The battles of Stormberg, Magersfontein and Colenso all saw the British endure significantly heavier casualties than the Boers.

The Battle of Colenso was a humiliating defeat for the British where they lost 1,137 casualties compared to 38 Boers

October-December 1899      10-15 December 1899      23-24 January 1900      15 February - 18 May 1900

## THE BOER OFFENSIVE

After declaring war, the Boer republics invaded the Cape Colony with more than 30,000 commandos. The outnumbered British won some initial tactical victories but were then besieged at Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking.

Right: During the Siege of Mafeking, the British released bulletins on thin paper to boost morale. The masthead defiantly proclaimed, "Issued daily, shells permitting"



## BATTLE OF SPION KOP

Arguably the most famous Boer victory of the war, the battle saw the British incur 1,493 casualties as they attempted to capture enemy positions on a steep hill. The defeat delayed the relief of Ladysmith by a month.

British soldiers lie dead on the battlefield of Spion Kop. Hundreds were killed in a relatively small area that became known as 'An Acre of Massacre'



## RELIEF OF THE BRITISH GARRISONS

After the shock defeats of 'Black Week', the British sent heavy reinforcements to South Africa under the command of Lord Frederick Roberts. Kimberley and Ladysmith were relieved within three months.



Above: When Ladysmith was relieved on 28 February 1900, the garrison commander greeted the first relief column by saying "Thank God we kept the flag flying"



The guerrilla phase of the war was characterised by daring raids carried out by charismatic leaders such as Louis Botha

## GUERRILLA WAR

Although the republics had been annexed, Boer commandos continued to operate on the veldt and used the hilly terrain to their advantage. The British responded by adopting a scorched earth policy to reduce enemy supplies.

**“28,000 BOER WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND AT LEAST 20,000 BLACK PEOPLE DIED IN TERRIBLE CONDITIONS”**

## CONCENTRATION CAMPS

In order to further pressurise the commandos, the British burned farms and interned civilians, both black and white, in camps to further reduce supplies. 28,000 Boer women and children and at least 20,000 black people died in terrible conditions.



Tents in the Bloemfontein concentration camp, where thousands died from malnutrition and disease

13 March-1 September 1900

1900-02

1900-02

31 May 1902



Above: Field Marshal Roberts rides into Pretoria, Transvaal on 5 June 1900. The Transvaal was the largest Boer republic to resist the rule of the British Empire

## ANNEXATION OF THE BOER REPUBLICS

Roberts advanced on the Boer republics and occupied Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State and Pretoria, the capital of the Transvaal. Both states were incorporated into the British Empire by September 1900.

## TREATY OF VEREENIGING

The Boers were eventually worn down by the harsh British counter-guerrilla measures and signed a peace treaty, reluctantly admitting defeat. The two republics accepted British sovereignty in exchange for a general amnesty and financial compensation.



Lord Kitchener (centre, left) oversees terms of surrender. Boer General Koos de la Rey wearily remarked during negotiations, “Isn’t this the bitter end?”

Images: Alamy, Getty

# HOW THE WAR UNFOLDED



British Royal Horse Artillery gunners, with a BL 12 pounder 7 cwt field gun



Right: A Boer field gun commanding the loop of the Tugela River during the Battle of Colenso

How Britain's 19th-century army developed into a 20th-century-war machine to grind down the Boers' guerrilla army

## 1 SIEGE OF MAFEKING BEGINS

13 OCTOBER 1899

When war breaks out, the Boers move quickly to capture British bases. Mafeking is among the first to be attacked. It will hold out until relieved in May 1900 by a force led by Robert Baden-Powell.



Left: Lieutenant Robert Baden Powell (centre) in Mafeking shortly after its relief. Its liberation had little tactical importance but it gave a much-needed boost to morale

## 2 SIEGE OF KIMBERLEY BEGINS

14 OCTOBER 1899

The British enclave at Kimberley is also attacked. A spirited defence is mounted that prevents the base from being taken. It remains under siege until relieved in February 1900.

## 3 SIEGE OF LADYSMITH BEGINS

2 NOVEMBER 1899

After an initial engagement that sees 800 British troops captured, the garrison at Ladysmith is surrounded by a Boer army.



Left: Mounted British troops and wagons of Sir Redvers Buller's relief column advance on Ladysmith, February 1900

## 4 BATTLE OF COLENZO

15 DECEMBER 1899

This final clash of what the Press dubbed 'Black Week' sees the third British defeat in a matter of days, during which they suffer a total of 2,776 casualties.

"A 20,000-STRONG BRITISH FORCE TAKES ON 7,000 BOERS. THE WAR'S LAST SET-PIECE BATTLE SEES THE BOER LINE BREAK BUT AT A TERRIBLE COST TO THE BRITISH"

47,000 BRITISH EMPIRE REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE

9 NOVEMBER 1899, TABLE BAY, CAPE TOWN

LORD ROBERTS AND GENERAL KITCHENER ARRIVE TO LEAD THE CAMPAIGN

10 JANUARY 1900, CAPE TOWN

Right: It would take five months for Lord Roberts to reach one of the Boer capitals, at Pretoria





**FINAL CLASH: BRITISH TROOPS SCORE MINOR VICTORY AT BATTLE OF ROOIWAL**  
11 APRIL 1902, ROOIWAL

**GUERRILLA VICTORY AT THE BATTLE OF NOOITGEDACHT**  
13 DECEMBER 1900, NOOITGEDACHT

**LORD ROBERTS CAPTURES PRETORIA**  
5 JUNE 1900, PRETORIA

**TREATY OF VEREENIGING SIGNED**  
31 MAY 1902, PRETORIA

**BOERS WIN THE BATTLE OF GROENKOP**  
25 DECEMBER 1901, NORTH OF PRETORIA

**SCORCHED EARTH POLICY**  
16 JUNE 1900, PRETORIA

**FIRST CONCENTRATION CAMPS ESTABLISHED**  
22 SEPTEMBER 1900, PRETORIA AND BLOEMFONTEIN

**BRITISH ANTAGONISM CAUSES THE BOERS TO DECLARE WAR**  
11 OCTOBER 1899, BLOEMFONTEIN, SOUTH AFRICA

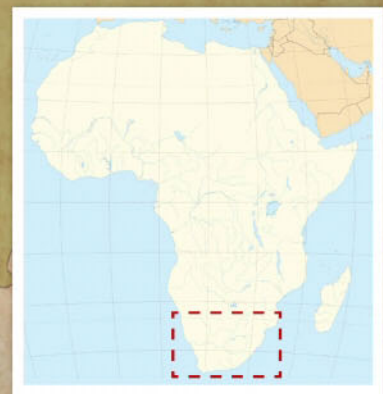
**BATTLE OF TUGELA HEIGHTS LEADS TO RELIEF OF LADYSMITH**  
14-27 FEBRUARY, UTHEKULA NORTH OF LADYSMITH

**BLACK WEEK CONTINUES: BRITISH DEFEATED AT THE BATTLE OF MAGERSFONTEIN**  
11 DECEMBER 1899, MAGERSFONTEIN

**THE BOERS INVADE NATAL**  
13 OCTOBER 1899, BETWEEN NEWCASTLE & LADYSMITH

**BOER SCORE GUERRILLA VICTORY AT THE BATTLE OF BLOOD RIVER POORT**  
17 SEPTEMBER 1901, SCHEEPERSNEK

**BLACK WEEK BEGINS: BRITISH DEFEATED AT THE BATTLE OF STORMBERG**  
10 DECEMBER 1899, STORMBERG



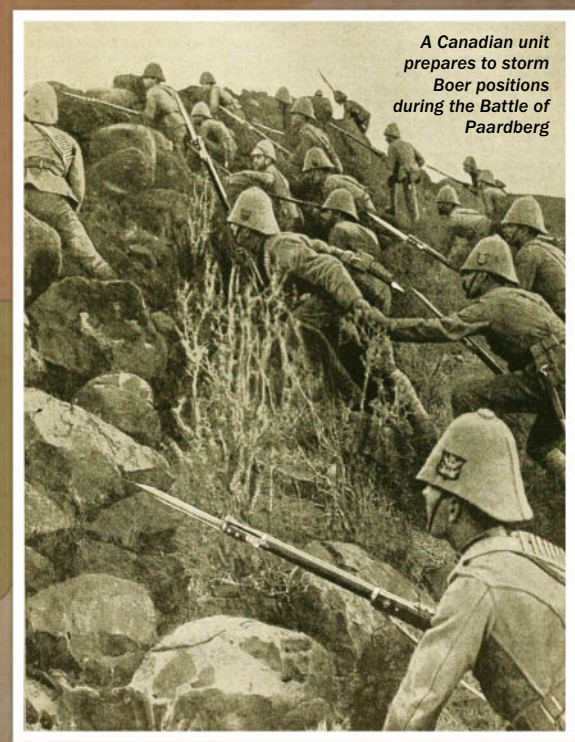
Right: For much of the war, Boer guerrillas raided, harried and ambushed British troops with great success, as at Tweebosch

**5 BATTLE OF SPION KOP**  
23 JANUARY 1900

In an attempt to capture high ground, the relief column heading for Ladysmith suffers costly set backs. Ladysmith is eventually relieved on 28 February.

**6 BATTLE OF PAARDEBERG**  
18-27 FEBRUARY 1900

The relief column heading towards Kimberley outflanks the Boers besieging them. More than 4,000 Boers are captured, although British casualties are far higher – nearly 1,300 killed or wounded compared to 350.



A Canadian unit prepares to storm Boer positions during the Battle of Paardeberg

**7 BATTLE OF BERGENDAL**  
21-27 AUGUST 1900

A 20,000-strong British force takes on 7,000 Boers. The war's last set-piece battle sees the Boer line break but at a terrible cost to the British. The Boers now wage a guerrilla campaign.

**8 BATTLE OF TWEBOSCH**  
7 MARCH 1902

One of the war's last clashes was typical of the fighting that had taken place since Bergendal, with Boer commandos ambushing a British column and inflicting 394 casualties for the loss of 51.



Images: Alamy, freeVectorMaps.com

**“THORNEYCROFT’S MEN ANNOUNCED THEIR VICTORY WITH THREE LOUD HURRAHS THAT RANG OUT ACROSS THE VELDT. LITTLE WERE THEY TO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT THE REAL BATTLE WAS YET TO BEGIN”**



*Poor visibility and intelligence gathering meant that the British forces were exposed to withering fire*

# BATTLE OF SPION KOP

In January 1900, the British army suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of a guerrilla army

As the 19th century drew to a close, Britain's quest to seize the vast gold fields that South Africa's Boers had discovered in The Transvaal wasn't going well. When war had broken out three months earlier, Boer militias had struck pre-emptively against British bases in the region, laying siege to the garrisons at Mafeking, Kimberley and Ladysmith.

It was a move the British hadn't expected. They, after all, were masters of the greatest empire the world had ever seen. How could a bunch of uppity farmers and prospectors have the impudence to take them on? Their response was to raise a vast colonial army that would eventually number 500,000 men to crush the 40,000 Boer irregulars who stood between them and what was then the world's biggest-known gold deposit.

By January 1900, sufficient reinforcements had arrived in South Africa for the British to make a renewed attempt to relieve the beleaguered garrison at Ladysmith. Troops, led by General Charles Warren set out for the town and were just 26 kilometres away when they encountered a formidable range of hills. Determined to seize this high ground rather than bypass it, Warren ordered his army to bludgeon their way through these hills, including the largest in the region, the 430-metre-high Spion Kop. It stood at the heart of the defensive Boer line and once taken, Warren figured it could be used to rain artillery fire on General Louis Botha's army of farmers.

## Surprise attack

The assault on Spion Kop was to be a surprise attack led by Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Thorneycroft. On the night of 23 January, Thorneycroft's Mounted Infantry – an irregular unit of 1,700 volunteers – began creeping up Spion Kop's southerly slopes in silence. Although the spearhead of a much larger force, they had no intelligence about the enemy resistance they were about to face.

Around 3am in dense mist, the British reached the grassy plateau that led to Spion Kop's summit. Here, they were finally challenged by a small force of Boers who opened fire on them. Thorneycroft's troops charged forward, bayonets fixed and after a brief skirmish, the Boers fell back. The hill had been

taken, it seemed, with only minor casualties. Thorneycroft's men announced their victory with three loud hurrahs that rang out across the Veldt. Little were they to know, however, that the real battle was yet to begin.

The British now dug themselves in as best they could, barely managing to scrape their way 40 centimetres down into the harsh, rocky land. As dawn broke, Thorneycroft began to realise just how vulnerable these defences were. As the mist lifted, he could now see that the Boers occupied a horseshoe of hills around his front and flanks that were perfectly positioned to bombard Spion Kop. Worse still, his troops had actually failed to take Spion Kop's highest point, which the Boers were now rapidly reinforcing.

## The Boers hit back

Around 8am, fire began raining down on Thorneycroft's men from three sides with artillery fire – directed by those at the top of Spion Kop via heliograph – smashing into their position at the rate of 10 rounds per minute. It continued for hours, only punctuated by brief bouts of brutal hand-to-hand fighting as the Boers tried to dislodge Thorneycroft's men. By late afternoon, despite heavy losses, almost relentless bombardment and fierce sniper fire, the British still held their shrinking position. Things were becoming increasingly desperate, though, as searing heat and exhaustion sapped their resolve and Thorneycroft's requests for assistance went unheeded by General Warren who dithered in safety three kilometres away.

By sunset, after 16 hours of fighting with casualties mounting and supplies dwindling, Thorneycroft ordered an unauthorised withdrawal. He would face recriminations for his actions but would ultimately save the lives of hundreds of his men. Unknown to him, however, just as his troops were melting into the darkness, so too were the Boers.

Having also lost the will to fight they too had abandoned the Spion Kop. When a handful returned the following morning, they were astounded to find that the only British still on the hill were the 243 dead left three deep in the shallow trenches that would now become their graves.

Left: General Botha led the Boer army. He went on to become South Africa's first prime minister



## UNLIKELY COMRADES

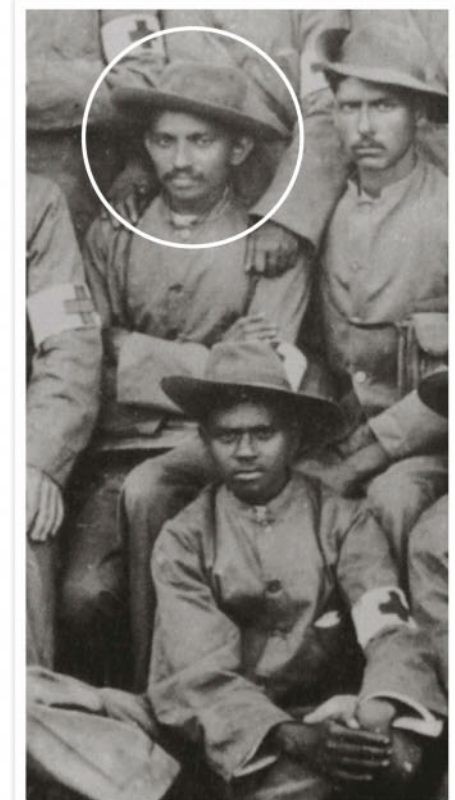
TWO MEN WHO WOULD GO ON TO BE GLOBAL POLITICAL SUPERSTARS – AND OPPONENTS – WITNESSED THE KILLING AT SPION KOP FIRST HAND

In later life they would wage a war of words against each other over Indian Independence, but during the Boer War, Winston Churchill and Mahatma Gandhi both served the same side. Both also bore witness to the slaughter on Spion Kop.

By 1900, Churchill had left the British army without winning the medals he believed he needed to launch his political career. Seeing the Boer War as an ideal opportunity to earn fame instead, he got a job as a war correspondent for the *London Morning Post* and headed to Natal intent on making himself headline news. Having already dramatically escaped from a Boer POW camp just weeks earlier, Churchill was with Warren's column when it encountered Spion Kop. He spent much of 24 January galloping between Thorneycroft and Warren delivering messages.

Gandhi, meanwhile, who had been working in South Africa as a lawyer, had immediately formed the Natal Indian Ambulance Corps when war broke out. His reasons were also political – he wanted to prove to the British that Hindus were equal to their white overlords when it came to physically demanding activity. He and his fellow stretcher-bearers spent much of the day ferrying Spion Kop's wounded to field hospitals.

Below: Gandhi (circled below with arms crossed) was a stretcher bearer during the battle



# HEAD TO HEAD

How the professional mounted infantry units of the British Empire's army shaped up to the Boer insurgency's amateur civilian commandos

## MOUNTED INFANTRY

LOYALTY: BRITISH EMPIRE YEARS IN OPERATION: 1899-1902

### HORSEMANSHIP

For mounted infantrymen, the horse was merely a means of (often slow) transportation for moving in columns, British Empire troops received only basic instruction in how to ride a horse.

### MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

Not only was knowledge of the local terrain limited, but British commanders frequently failed – often out of sheer arrogance – to carry out reconnaissance patrols, believing the Boer insurgency to be an inferior enemy.

### MARKSMANSHIP

Often completed hurriedly, firearms training was limited, with troops receiving no instruction on how to shoot from the saddle. After the war, the British made concerted efforts to improve the marksmanship of recruits.

### MORALE

Victorian Imperial ideology was a powerful force. Many troops – recruited throughout the empire – came to fight in South Africa, believing that serving the crown and dying for its Imperial cause was a noble venture.

### TOTAL

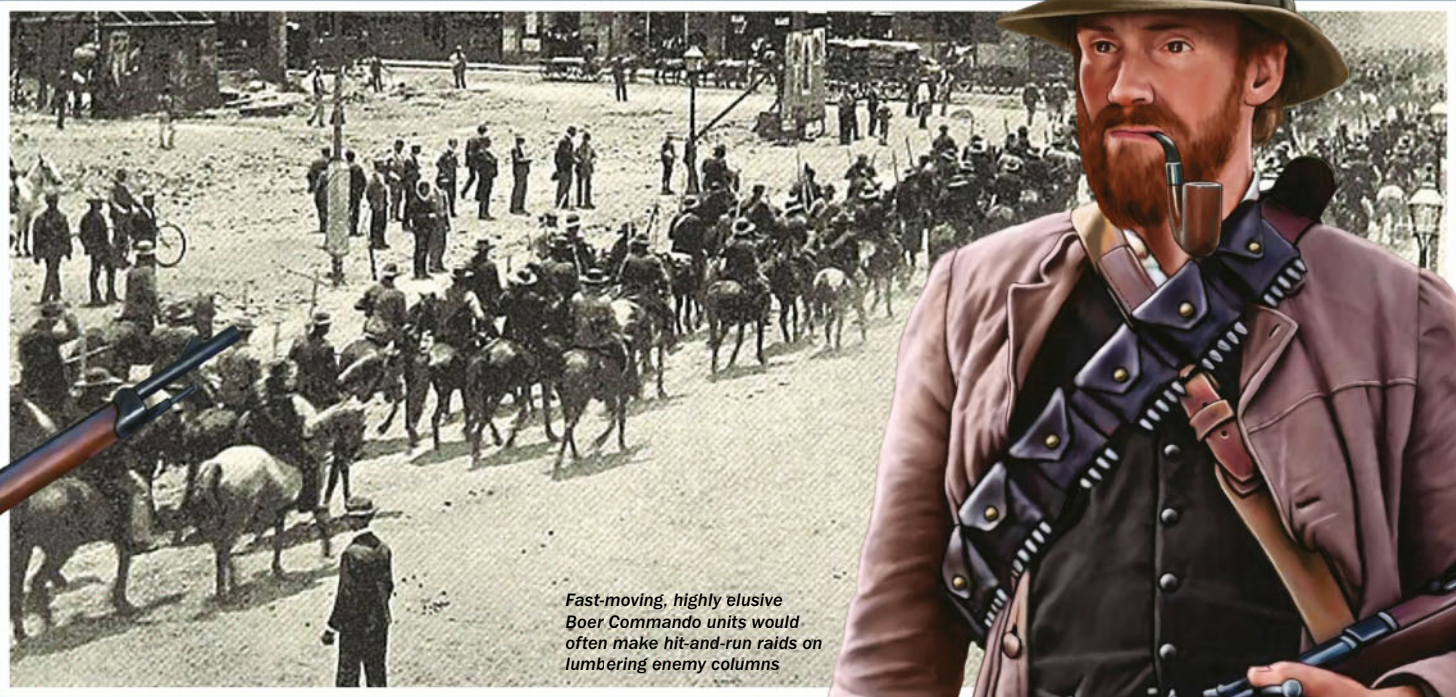


*Below: Thousands of mounted infantrymen like these Australians were hurriedly raised by the British when the war against the Boers didn't go to plan*

## ALL THE EMPIRE'S HORSES

Mounted Infantry (MI) units were drawn from all over the British Empire to fight in the Boer War, with thousands of Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, and even South Africans answering the call to arms. Unlike a cavalryman, whose horse was part of his weaponry, MI were chiefly infantrymen who rode horses rather than marched, but when it came time to fight, tended to dismount and use their weapons on foot. By the end of the conflict, however, cavalry units had become indistinguishable from MI as the infantry rifle replaced the swords, lances and carbines that these previously elite units had traditionally fought with.





*Fast-moving, highly elusive Boer Commando units would often make hit-and-run raids on lumbering enemy columns*

## THE BACKBONE OF THE MILITIA

Forming the core of the Boer militias, the commandos proved to be formidable opponents for the vast army the British Empire pitted against them. Although considered by the British as farmers who had taken up arms against them, the Boers had created the paramilitary commando system as far back as the 18th century. Initially devised as a means of protecting their communities against hostile African tribes, it demanded that all men between the age of 16-60 could be called upon to fight for their settlement, and by the Boer War, they had developed complex command structures and training systems.

## BOER COMMANDO

**LOYALTY:** ORANGE FREE STATE & S AFRICAN REPUBLIC **YEARS IN OPERATION:** 1899-1902

### HORSEMANSHIP

..... ☆ .....

All Boer troops were mounted. Trained to ride since childhood, they proved to be impressive cavalymen. So key was the horse to their battlefield tactics that each unit kept spare animals tended to by support troops called 'Agterryers' or backriders.

### MILITARY INTELLIGENCE

..... ☆ .....

Unlike the British, the Boers knew the country intimately, understanding both its terrain and climate. They were also less tactically rigid, switching from a fast-moving guerrilla campaign to inflicting heavy casualties against a numerically superior enemy.

### MARKSMANSHIP

..... ☆ .....

British troops came to fear Boer long-range marksmanship. Trained to use rifles for hunting purposes since childhood, they proved highly accurate shots, whether firing from cover or the back of a galloping horse.

### MORALE

..... ☆ .....

The Boers were fighting for their lives against a hugely powerful enemy they had no hope of beating. They fought tenaciously even when their farms were burned and their families interned, but were eventually broken.

### TOTAL



**“THE COMMANDOS PROVED TO BE FORMIDABLE OPPONENTS FOR THE VAST ARMY THE BRITISH EMPIRE PITTED AGAINST THEM”**



Images: Alamy. Illustrations: Jean-Michel Girard / The Art Agency

# THE ORIGINAL CONCENTRATION CAMPS?

The most infamous event of the conflict was the forced internment of tens of thousands of Boer and black African civilians in horrendous, often fatal, conditions

**L**ike the American Civil War, the Boer War helped to normalise modern methods of warfare that would become commonplace in 20th-century conflicts, such as telegraphs, armoured trains, trench systems, machine guns and practical uniforms. With the advent of this new industrial warfare came an increased detachment from codes of conduct that supposedly underpinned the military behaviour of European powers, particularly towards civilians.

'Gentlemanly warfare' had always been a hollow concept, and atrocities against civilians were nothing new, but the British conduct towards the Boer and black population was striking. Their use of concentration camps to ensure a swift victory was a dark leap into a new kind of war. The high casualties set the tone for future conflicts and were made all the more chilling for their unemotional disregard for human suffering.

When Lord Herbert Kitchener succeeded Lord Roberts as commander of the British forces in South Africa in November 1900, he escalated his predecessor's scorched-earth policy. Kitchener was an imperial hammer who lived by the logic that pure force won wars. He

not only ordered the burning of thousands of farms but also that Boer civilians, especially women and children, were to be interned in camps. This was to deprive the Boer commandos of food supplies and therefore squeeze the guerrilla war into submission. Kitchener also believed that the internments would persuade commandos to surrender in order to be reunited with their families.

Black Africans were also interned in separate camps in another attempt to deprive the commandos of food, but also to use them as labour for reopened gold mines. There were 45 tented camps for Boer internees and 64 for black Africans, while captured commandos were sent overseas. Consequently, the majority of the internees were women and children but the poor administration of the camps meant that conditions were atrocious.

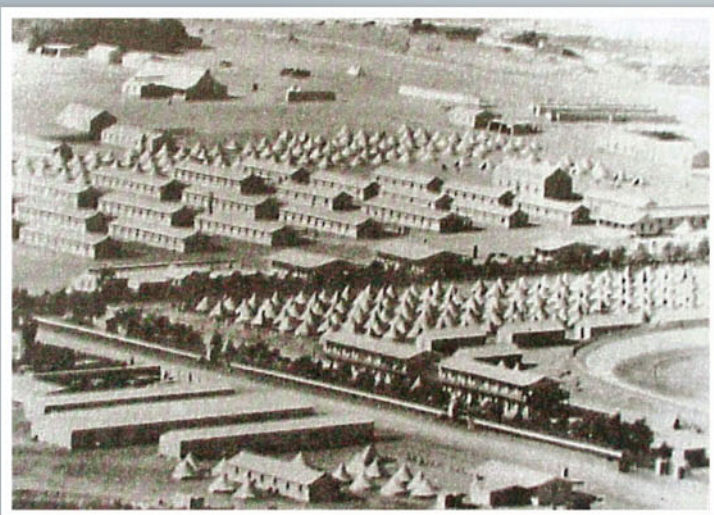
Inadequate hygiene and food supplies led to epidemics of typhoid, measles and dysentery and in a vindictive measure, the families of fighting commandos were given smaller rations. The inevitable result was an increasing mortality rate, particularly in children.

This growing crisis came to the attention of a British woman called

*Right: Herbert Kitchener's implementation of concentration camps during the Boer War became a dark stain on his career*



**"THE RATIONS WERE EXTREMELY MEAGRE AND WHEN THE ACTUAL QUANTITY DISPENSED FELL SHORT OF THE AMOUNT PRESCRIBED, IT SIMPLY MEANT FAMINE"**



*Left: Boer POW's were held in transit camps like Green Point Common before being shipped overseas*

Internees were accommodated in overcrowded tents and shelters that were highly unsuitable for the rigours of the South African climate



Lizzie van Zyl became the most visible symbol of conditions in the concentration camps. Aged only seven when she died in May 1901, Emily Hobhouse described her as "a frail, weak little child in desperate need of good care"

## "NO BARBARITY IN SOUTH AFRICA WAS AS SEVERE AS THE BLEAK CRUELTY OF AN APATHETIC PARLIAMENT"

Emily Hobhouse, who was a member of the non-sectarian South African Women and Children's Distress Fund. Hobhouse organised a national committee and then travelled to South Africa to distribute charitable funds. Kitchener gave her a limited pass to visit the Bloemfontein camp and what she found on 24 January 1901 appalled her.

Almost 2,000 people lived in the camp, 900 of whom were children. Hobhouse described: "There was a scarcity of essential provisions. The accommodation was wholly inadequate. The water supply was inadequate. No bedstead or mattress was procurable. The rations were extremely meagre and when the actual quantity dispensed fell short of the amount prescribed, it simply meant famine."

Hobhouse realised her charitable funds could not cover the costs of the necessities needed and wrote, "Without these things, relief was hardly more than a thing of mockery." To confound matters the British authorities ignored Hobhouse's pleas to improve conditions and she received nonchalant responses including: "Soap is an article of luxury" and that the humanitarian's attitude demonstrated, "too much personal sympathy." Hobhouse's response to the latter comment was simply, "That was the precise reason why I came out - to show personal sympathy and to render assistance."

Hobhouse's subsequent report on conditions, published in *The Guardian*, forced a parliamentary debate at Westminster but it led nowhere and she bitterly reflected, "No barbarity in South Africa was as severe as the bleak cruelty of an apathetic

parliament." Hobhouse was later banned from visiting the camps and was even briefly imprisoned in Cape Town before being deported.

By the end of the war, 27,927 Boers (22,074 of who were children under 16) and at least 14,000 black Africans had died of starvation, disease and exposure in the camps. The black African statistic is almost certainly an underestimation as no proper records were kept of their captivity and the true fatalities may be as high as 20,000. In total, the deaths accounted for approximately 12 per cent of the black internees and 25 per cent of the Boers.

Although concentration camps were not invented by the British, (during the 1890s similar systems had been used the Spanish in Cuba and the Americans in the Philippines) they were the most high-profile until the Nazi death camps and Stalinist Gulags.

An important distinction is that British camps were intended for the extermination of Boers or black Africans - British soldiers were also among the suffering - but this callous approach left poisonous wounds. The fear of racial extinction at the hands of the British or by the black African majority led many Boers to believe that racial segregation and white minority rule was the only way to ensure their survival. The camps greatly fuelled an already harsh Afrikaner nationalism that eventually led to the infamous Apartheid policies of 1948-91.

Tragically, the victims of the British camps were not just those who died, but also the oppressed black majority who then endured a century of discrimination thanks to the bitterness created by the Boer War. Emily Hobhouse, who did much to try to prevent the suffering, later wrote with eerie prescience, "Personally, I believe that the segregation of any of either race or colour or class is the wrong policy and one which can only lead to discontent and ultimate disaster."

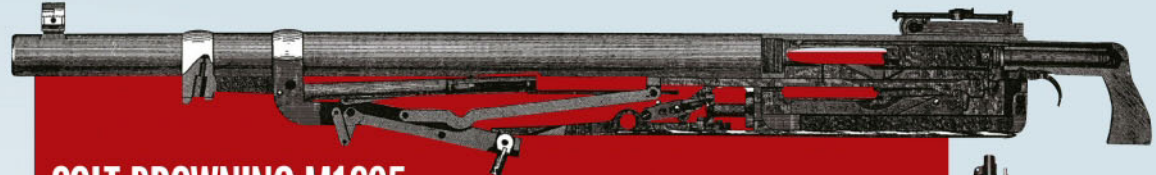
Left: Emily Hobhouse risked the criticism of the British authorities and public to help those suffering in the concentration camps



# WEAPONS OF THE BOER WAR

Both the Boers and Imperial troops were well equipped with the latest arms by the time the conflict began

**F**ought with magazine rifles and machine guns, the Second Boer War was a truly modern conflict. As tensions mounted between the Boers and the British after the botched Jameson Raid of 1895-96 – which had been intended to trigger an uprising of British expats living in Boer territories – the Boers began arming themselves with the best weapons their gold could buy.



## COLT-BROWNING M1895

At 16 kilograms, this US-built machine gun was significantly lighter than the Maxim. Belt fed and gas operated, it could hammer out around 450 rounds per minute. As it was air rather than water-cooled, it was also easier to maintain and move around.

*Above: Nicknamed the potato digger due to its unusual operating system, this weapon was used to great effect by Canadian troops against the Boers*

*Right: This bulky weapon could be broken down and carried by pack animals or placed on wheels like an artillery piece*



## MAXIM MACHINE GUN

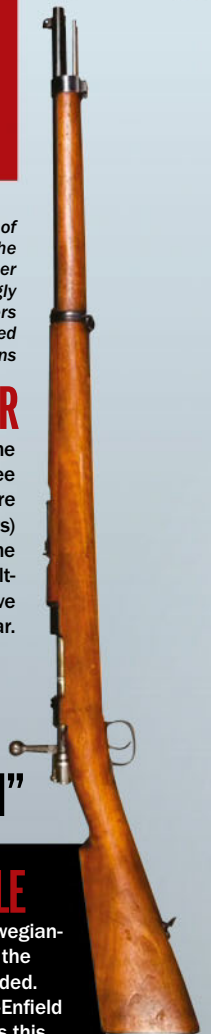
Capable of firing 600 rounds per minute, this heavy machine gun was an indication of the way war would go in the 20th century. Weighing in at nearly 30 kilograms, this weapon was incredibly difficult to move but it had the sustained firepower of 30 riflemen.

*Right: As supplies of ammunition for the German-built Mauser became increasingly scarce, the Boers started using captured British weapons*

## MODEL 95 MAUSER

Bought in large quantities by the governments of the Orange Free State and Transvaal, these were given to Boer burghers (farmers) to defend themselves against the British. This magazine-fed, bolt-operated rifle proved highly effective in the early stages of the war.

**“THIS WEAPON WAS INCREDIBLY DIFFICULT TO MOVE BUT IT HAD THE SUSTAINED FIREPOWER OF 30 RIFLEMEN”**



## KRAG-JØRGENSEN RIFLE

Also used by the Boers was this Norwegian-built weapon. Its unique feature was the ability to fire while it was being reloaded. Both the Mauser and the British Lee-Enfield required the bolt to be open, whereas this could be fed with rounds from the side.

*Left: The side-loading plate was innovative but rounds could only be loaded one at a time rather than collectively via a clip*

*Below: Around 300 Krag-Jørgensen rifles were purchased by the Boers and were used in battles like Magersfontein*







*In various forms, the Lee-Enfield rifle would stay in active service with the British army until 1993*

**“WITH AN EFFECTIVE RANGE OF MORE THAN HALF A KILOMETRE, A WELL-TRAINED SOLDIER COULD FIRE 20 OR MORE AIMED SHOTS PER MINUTE”**

### LEE-ENFIELD MK1 RIFLE

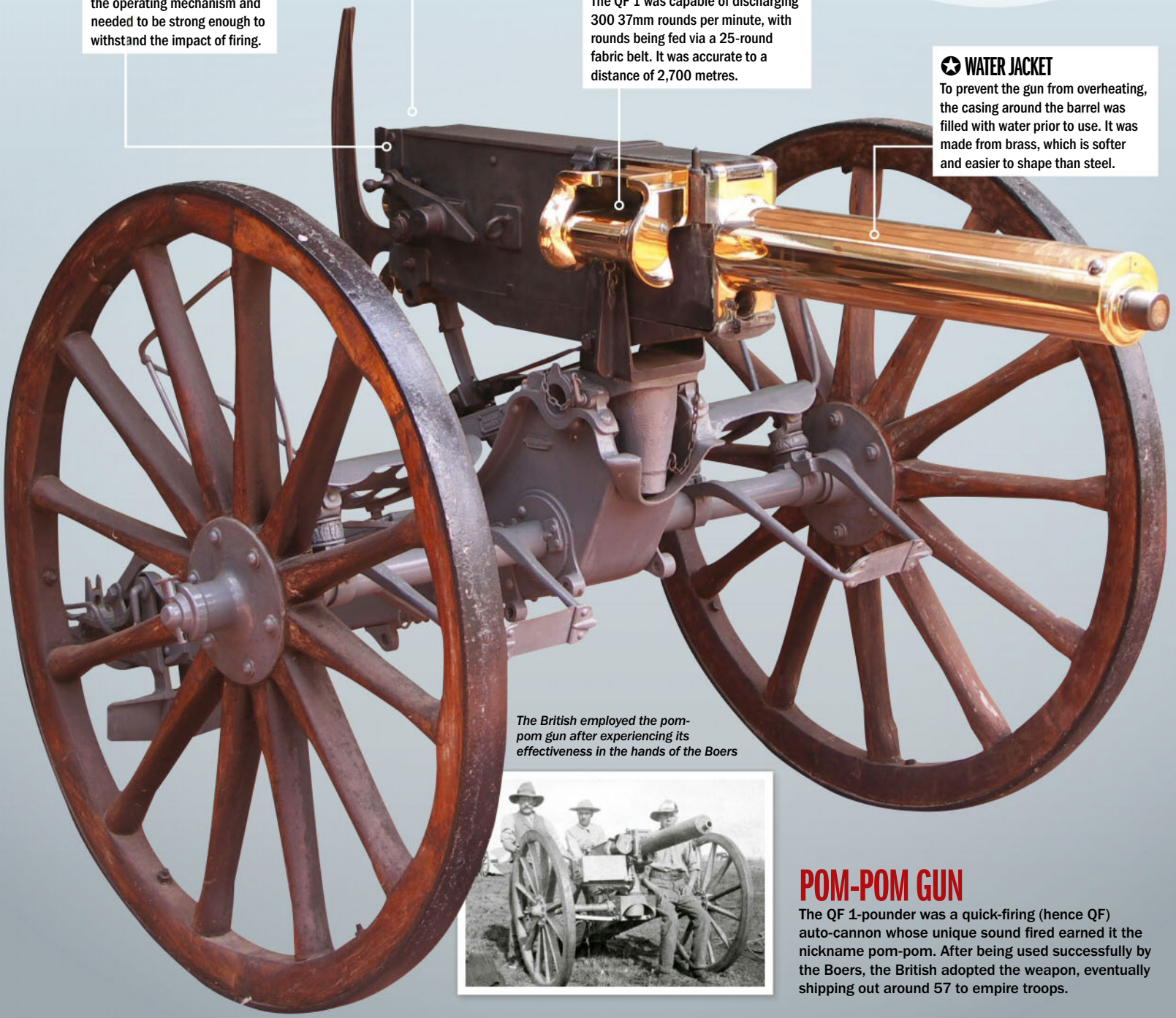
The British army adopted the Lee-Enfield rifle in 1895. With an effective range of more than half a kilometre, a well-trained soldier could fire 20 or more aimed shots per minute from this bolt-action, magazine-fed .303 calibre rifle.

**ELEVATION WHEEL**  
Weighing in at a 186 kilograms, not including its gun carriage mount, the weapon's sights were raised and lowered using a wheel located at the rear.

**FIRING MECHANISM**  
The gun is made of a mix of metals. Steel was used to build the operating mechanism and needed to be strong enough to withstand the impact of firing.

**BELT FED**  
The QF 1 was capable of discharging 300 37mm rounds per minute, with rounds being fed via a 25-round fabric belt. It was accurate to a distance of 2,700 metres.

**WATER JACKET**  
To prevent the gun from overheating, the casing around the barrel was filled with water prior to use. It was made from brass, which is softer and easier to shape than steel.



*The British employed the pom-pom gun after experiencing its effectiveness in the hands of the Boers*



### POM-POM GUN

The QF 1-pounder was a quick-firing (hence QF) auto-cannon whose unique sound fired earned it the nickname pom-pom. After being used successfully by the Boers, the British adopted the weapon, eventually shipping out around 57 to empire troops.

# HEROES & COMMANDERS

The Boer War produced leaders on both sides that demonstrated extreme personal heroism. Among their number were recipients of the Victoria Cross, innovative guerrillas and the founder of the Boy Scouts

## FREDERICK ROBERTS THE ELDERLY ARCHITECT OF BRITISH VICTORY YEARS: 1832-1914 LOYALTY: BRITISH EMPIRE

The British victory in the Boer War has largely been credited to Lord Kitchener, whose harsh scorched-earth policy and infamous implementation of concentration camps forced the final Boer surrender in 1902. Nevertheless, it was his predecessor Field Marshal Lord Roberts who successfully annexed the Transvaal and Orange Free State and made the Boer defeat inevitable.

Born into an Anglo-Irish military family, Roberts was commissioned into the British Army in 1851 and was posted to India. During the Indian Rebellion of 1857-59, he won a Victoria Cross at Khudaganj when he saved the life of a loyal sepoy and captured a rebel standard. By 1895, he was a field marshal and following the disasters of 'Black Week', he was appointed the commander of British forces in South Africa on 16 December 1899. His appointment tragically coincided with the death of his son Frederick who won a posthumous VC at the Battle of Colenso.

Despite his grief, Roberts arrived in South Africa in January 1900 and immediately

reorganised the British forces. Now in his late 60s and affectionately known as 'Bobs', Roberts concentrated and centralised all of his forces south of the Modder River. His plan was a simple full advance to occupy the Boer states and although he was often hampered by supply problems, the besieged garrisons of Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking were relieved. On 13 March, Bloemfontein, the capital of the Orange Free State, was occupied and this was followed by the capture of Johannesburg in May and the Transvaal capital of Pretoria on 5 June.

Although Roberts frequently underestimated the Boers, his operations were nevertheless a success and he occupied their capitals and advanced 800 kilometres in nine months. Although the war would continue for two years, Roberts's achievements meant that a British victory was inevitable. Bobs handed his command to Kitchener in November and returned home to become the last Commander-in-Chief of British Forces.

*Right: Sir Alfred Milner, the governor of Cape Colony, held Roberts in high regard: "As a leader of men in the field he is, I believe, without equal"*



## ROBERT BADEN-POWELL THE 'CHIEF SCOUT' OF MAFEKING YEARS: 1857-1941 LOYALTY: BRITISH EMPIRE

Baden-Powell's fame largely rests on his founding of the international Scout Movement but he also was equally well known for his successful defence of Mafeking.

Joining the British Army in 1876 as a lieutenant, Baden-Powell saw active service in African colonial wars and he developed significant scouting skills. By 1897, he was the youngest colonel in the army and in July 1899, Baden-Powell was the commander of the north west frontier forces in South Africa. He occupied Mafeking with a garrison of 1,500 men and when 8,000 Boers besieged the town, Baden-Powell settled in for a siege that lasted 217 days.

'B-P' adopted a carefree demeanour to boost morale despite serious food shortages.

He organised concerts, polo and cricket matches for the inhabitants and published a newspaper called the *Mafeking Mail*. To hoodwink the Boers, various items were improvised to look like real guns and trains and he ordered his soldiers to 'avoid' non-existent mines in sight of the enemy. The British public were entranced by his deeds and when the siege was lifted, Baden-Powell became a national hero.



*Left: Baden-Powell was partially inspired to form the Scouting Movement by his observation of the boys of the Mafeking Cadet Corps*

*Below: Despite being a formidable foe of the British, Smuts (centre, seated) was one of the first to advocate a mutually beneficial peace*



**JAN SMUTS** THE DARING COMMANDO & FUTURE STATESMAN  
 YEARS: 1870-1950 LOYALTY: TRANSVAAL

Smuts was one of the most prominent figures in South African history who helped to unify the country and later became its prime minister. Despite carrying out this work under the British Empire, Smuts was initially a vigorous Afrikaner nationalist and fought for his native Transvaal during the war.

Smuts advocated Boer mobilisation and a swift campaign into Natal and Cape Colony. By 1900, he was a general leading commandos in western Transvaal and criss-crossed 1,600 kilometres, inflicting damage on the British. In August 1901, Smuts invaded Cape Colony with 340 men and by October they were within 80 kilometres of Port Elizabeth, before turning west to fight numerous encounters with the British.

In April 1902, Smuts lay siege to Okiep with 400 mounted Boers. Although initial attacks failed, he still considered filling a train with explosives and rolling it into town. However, peace talks were in progress and Smuts pragmatically realised that reconciliation with the British was the only option.

**“ALTHOUGH THE WAR WOULD CONTINUE FOR TWO YEARS, ROBERTS’S ACHIEVEMENTS MEANT THAT A BRITISH VICTORY WAS INEVITABLE”**

**KOOS DE LA REY**  
 THE OUTSTANDING & INNOVATIVE BOER COMMANDER  
 YEARS: 1847-1914 LOYALTY: ORANGE FREE STATE, TRANSVAAL

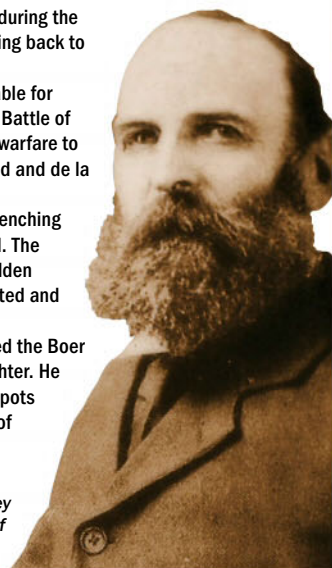
Widely regarded as one of the greatest leaders during the Boer War, de la Rey had military experience dating back to the Basotho War of 1865.

Between 1899-1902, de la Rey became notable for his use of innovation and tactical daring. At the Battle of Modder River, he encouraged the use of trench warfare to hold back the British, although his son was killed and de la Rey himself was wounded.

He then masterminded a Boer victory by entrenching his men on flat ground below Magersfontein Hill. The Boers were alerted to the British advance by hidden wires hung with tin cans. The British were defeated and suffered losses of more than 900 men.

Once the British were reinforced and occupied the Boer capitals, de la Rey became a skilful guerrilla fighter. He struck relentless blows against railway lines, depots and bridges and often captured large amounts of supplies and ammunition.

*Right: Known for his chivalric conduct, de la Rey would regularly release hundreds of prisoners if he had no means to support them*



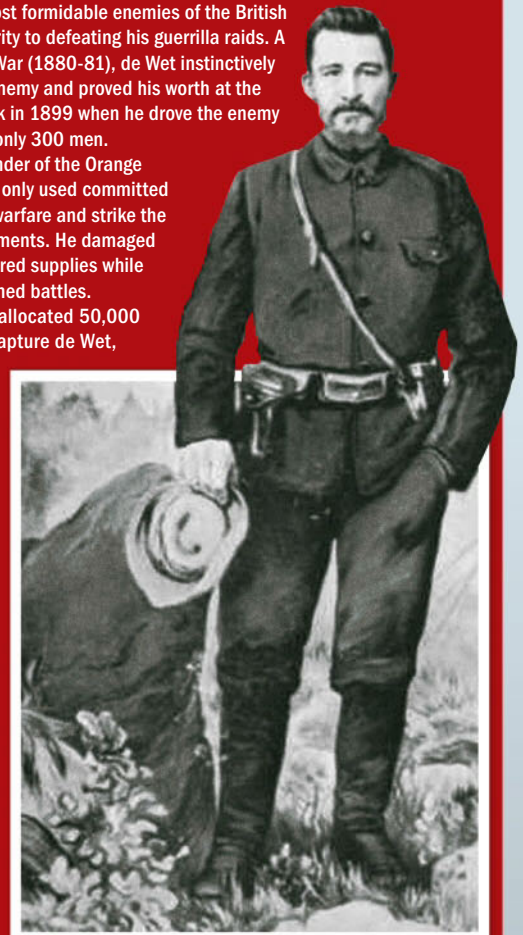
**CHRISTIAAN DE WET**  
 THE ELUSIVE ‘FIGHTING GENERAL’ OF THE VELDT  
 YEARS: 1854-1922 LOYALTY: ORANGE FREE STATE

De Wet was one of the most formidable enemies of the British and they gave a high priority to defeating his guerrilla raids. A veteran of the First Boer War (1880-81), de Wet instinctively knew how to harass the enemy and proved his worth at the Battle of Nicholson’s Neck in 1899 when he drove the enemy from their positions with only 300 men.

Appointed the commander of the Orange Free State forces, de Wet only used committed fighters to adopt mobile warfare and strike the British at unexpected moments. He damaged railway bridges and captured supplies while deliberately avoiding pitched battles.

The British eventually allocated 50,000 troops to surround and capture de Wet, but he eluded them and escaped to the Transvaal where he continued operations. Even when blockhouses and barbed wire attempted to cage de Wet, he still inflicted a defeat the Battle of Groenkop. By the time he reluctantly capitulated, de Wet was the acting president of the Orange Free State.

*Right: When the fiercely patriotic de Wet heard about a mass Boer surrender in 1900 he declared, “Horrendous, murder against the government and the nation”*



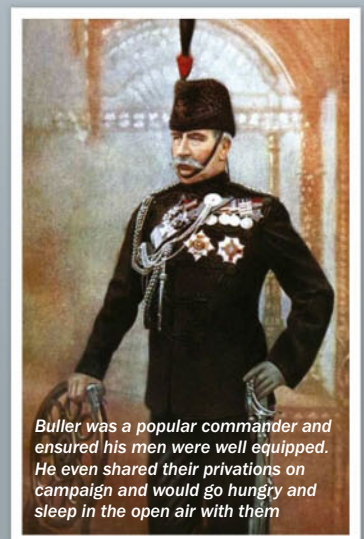
**REDVERS BULLER**  
 THE UNLUCKY COMMANDER DURING ‘BLACK WEEK’  
 YEARS: 1839-1908 LOYALTY: BRITISH EMPIRE

Buller was the first commander of British forces during the war. Like Roberts, he was a recipient of the Victoria Cross and had won it fighting in the Anglo-Zulu War.

Despite his heroism, Buller was primarily a staff officer and when he was given command of the South African forces, he had never held an independent command. When he arrived in South Africa on 30 October 1899, Ladysmith, Kimberley and Mafeking had already been besieged and he had to abandon his planned offensive.

Under his overall command, the British lost three battles during ‘Black Week’ and Buller himself was wounded at the Battle of Colenso. Roberts was appointed to replace Buller but before his arrival, he suffered further defeats at the battles of Spion Kop and Vaal Krantz before he was finally victorious on the Tugela Heights.

Buller was made into a scapegoat for the British failures but he was popular with both his men and the public.



*Buller was a popular commander and ensured his men were well equipped. He even shared their privations on campaign and would go hungry and sleep in the open air with them*

AN INTERVIEW WITH  
WING COMMANDER PAUL FARNES DFM

# THE HURRICANE ACE

WORDS TOM GARNER

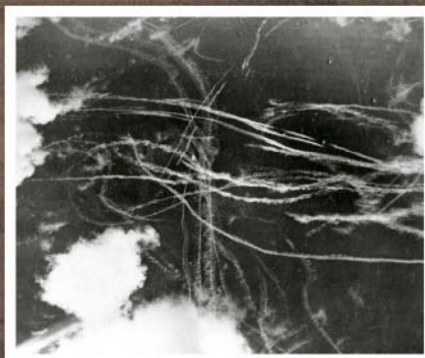
One of the surviving 'Few' from the Battle of Britain tells his extraordinary story of the aerial struggle that saved the United Kingdom from Nazi occupation



*Below: Nearly 600 of the 2,937 RAF pilots were non-British and the Polish pilots of 303 Squadron had the highest kill-to-loss ratio of any RAF squadron*



*Below: A pattern of contrails left by British and German aircraft after a dogfight. This was the new chaotic reality of aerial combat during WWII*



*Below: German Heinkel He 111 bombers fly over the English Channel in 1940. Farnes and 501 Squadron would directly target formations such as these*



Hurricanes from No.111 Squadron fly in tight formation. Hurricanes shot down more German aircraft than the Spitfire



**“GERMANY WAS BECOMING A BIT OF A NUISANCE AND I THINK EVERYONE WAS GETTING A BIT JITTERY, SO I WAS GLAD TO BE IN THE SERVICES”**

**I**t's 1940 and a young British pilot is flying his Hurricane alone over the fields of south-east England. Suddenly a German fighter-bomber appears out of nowhere and the airman has to think fast. He quickly swings his aircraft around, fires his machine guns and the enemy crashes from the skies. It is a small victory but in this fight every strike against the Luftwaffe counts; the survival of Britain is at stake.

The Hurricane pilot in question was Sergeant Pilot Paul Farnes. Now a wing commander and aged 98, Farnes is one of the last surviving members of 'the Few', the small group of Allied airmen who successfully defended Britain's skies between July-October 1940 when Europe had fallen to Nazi Germany and an invasion seemed imminent. The Battle of Britain has since gained iconic status and the bravery of the outnumbered pilots has long been recognised. As of January 2017, Farnes is one of only two surviving 'aces' from the battle and his story, like many of his contemporaries, is thrilling, understated and poignant in equal measure.

### Training to fly

Born on 16 July 1918 (the very same day that the Romanov family were executed), Farnes joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve aged 19 in April 1938. The RAFVR had been formed two years previous to supplement the Auxiliary Air Force, the territorial wing of the RAF. It was specifically designed to provide civilian support during emergencies and with war looming, Farnes volunteered. "By 1938 things were not looking too good. I think that a number of young chaps about my age were thinking, 'If war's going to come, we'd better get some training in and get some experience.' On that basis, I started by trying to join the Royal Navy. I got papers for joining but I met a chap who was the friend of a friend who said, 'Why don't you

fly? It's much more fun, you don't want to be in a ship. Come down with me at the weekend because I'm in the VR' so I went with him."

Once Farnes saw the airfield near Walton-on-Thames, his decision was made, "I was amazed. He'd been there some time and had a pass for Tiger Moths and was flying Hawker Harts. I thought 'Right' and decided to do something about it." In a sign of the times, Farnes thought his birth circumstances would prohibit his recruitment: "I am illegitimate and thought the air force wouldn't accept me but my adoptive mother wrote to the Air Ministry and they wrote back and said, 'So long as your son can pass the necessary exams we'd be glad to have him.' So that was it."

It was fortuitous timing, "Germany was becoming a bit of a nuisance and I think everyone was getting a bit jittery, so I was glad to be in the services." At this time the British government decided that VRs could do six months in the regular RAF and Farnes went to south Wales in July 1939. He had been training on Hawker Audax and Hind biplanes but now converted to Hurricanes, "It was great fun but before I'd finished my six months, war had broken out. I found myself in the air force and ready for war."

On 14 September 1939, Farnes joined 501 Squadron at RAF Filton. At this time 501 was an auxiliary Hurricane squadron and Farnes would serve in the unit for over a year. He was thankful that he didn't join alone, "I joined with a chap named Bob Dafforn who was about the tallest man in the air force. He was just more than two metres tall and had quite a job getting into a fighter aircraft; they had to shoehorn him in! We joined together, it was nice to know somebody like that, and it wasn't long until our squadron was posted to France."

### The Battle of France

Between 10 May and 25 June 1940, Germany swiftly invaded France and the Low Countries during its 'blitzkrieg' campaign. Allied armies, including the British Expeditionary Force, struggled to halt the onslaught. Farnes and 501 Squadron flew to Bétheniville in the Marne region on 10 May as part of the Advanced Air Striking Force and conducted operations against German aircraft. Bétheniville airfield was a series of grass fields outside the village

**Right: Paul Farnes in flying kit standing above the cockpit of a Spitfire. He describes the iconic fighter as a "beautiful aircraft and wonderful for aerobatics"**



and had limited working resources. “Our conditions were infinitely better than the army’s but we were still having to sleep pretty rough. It was pretty primitive living.”

Farnes remembers his time in France as, “A bit grim. You were suddenly pitched into a war and it was the first time we had fired our guns in anger.” Nevertheless, encountering enemy aircraft for the first time was thrilling: “It was very exciting. I was a bit apprehensive occasionally but I never felt afraid of anything,” he recalls. “I felt that we were certainly as good as the Germans.”

During this time, Farnes gained valuable combat experience destroying a Heinkel He 111 bomber, sharing a destroyed Dornier Do 17 bomber and possibly destroying another Heinkel He 111. The battle turned 501 into a battle-hardened squadron, but Allied efforts were not enough to save France. 501 is believed to have been the last RAF squadron to leave the country on 17 June and Farnes flew home via the Channel Islands, “We got shunted out. Two or three of us got to the Channel Islands by boat from France. We couldn’t all go with the squadron because there wasn’t enough aircraft. The main squadron flew over to Jersey and we got there by boat and met up with the squadron. Three of us were then told to fly over to Guernsey to look after the evacuation of the island.”

Farnes recalls that the defence of Guernsey was hopeless, “There wasn’t very much that went on, we didn’t see any Germans and no German aircraft came over so we felt that we

## “I DON’T KNOW WHAT WOULD HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT RADAR. IT WAS OUR GREAT SAVIOUR BECAUSE IT GAVE US THE HEIGHT OF THE ENEMY, HOW MANY OF THEM THERE WERE AND WHAT THEY WERE”

were wasting our time. There were three of us: an officer and another chap who was a sergeant pilot like myself. After about two days the officer, a bloke called Ken Lee, said, ‘I think we’ll go’. He must have spoken to somebody so we took off and flew back to Tangmere.”

Guernsey was doomed and with the other Channel Islands became the only part of the British Isles to come under German occupation. Meanwhile the defence of the mainland was underway and as Winston Churchill stated on 18 June, “The battle of France is over. I expect that the battle of Britain is about to begin.”

### The “Marvellous” Many

Once the squadron was back on home territory, 501’s main base was at Gravesend and later Kenley, although as Farnes explains, “We were based at Gravesend but every morning at the

crack of dawn we’d fly down to Hawkinge, which was just on the coast at Folkestone so we were much nearer to France and the oncoming Germans. By getting up there it made contact with the enemy a good deal easier.”

As part of ‘11 Group’, Farnes was on the frontline and tasked with defending London and south-east England from the main thrust of Operation Sea Lion: the planned German invasion of Britain.

His airborne drill was well rehearsed, “You were given instructions as a squadron by controllers as to whether we were at ‘Readiness’, ‘Availability’ or ‘Standby’ and we had various conditions. With ‘Available’, we had to be able to get airborne in 15-20 minutes. Then you had ‘Readiness’ where you had to be up within a few minutes or there was ‘Standby’ where you’d be strapped in the cockpit ready to take off.”

Despite these procedures, there was no fixed routine, “It was always different. It depended on some extent to the weather but the weather in 1940 was normally very good. However, we’d get some bad days of heavy cloud or rain where we didn’t take off very often.”

Although the Luftwaffe heavily outnumbered the RAF, its use of radar was a distinct advantage, “I don’t know what would have happened without radar. It was our great saviour because it gave us the height of the enemy, how many of them there were and what they were. That was all passed to us from ground controllers and also chaps who would



Members of the Women’s Auxiliary Air Force at work during 1940. Ground work was just as essential to victory as the battle in the air



Above: A Heinkel He 111 bomber flies over the Isle of Dogs on 7 September 1940. The London Blitz was a major factor in the German aerial defeat over Britain

# THE AERIAL BATTLEFIELD

THE STRUGGLE FOR BRITISH AIRSPACE INVOLVED A WIDE RANGE OF AIRCRAFT, FROM ICONIC FIGHTERS TO VULNERABLE BOMBERS AND EVEN OUTDATED BIPLANES

## HAWKER HURRICANE

The Hurricane was the most numerous RAF aircraft during the battle and shot down 656 German aircraft (particularly bombers), which was more than the Spitfire.

## SUPERMARINE SPITFIRE

The iconic symbol of the battle, the Spitfire was fast, manoeuvrable and responsible for downing 529 enemy aircraft with 230 losses.

## MESSERSCHMITT BF 109

The 'Me 109' was faster than a Spitfire, had experienced pilots and an effective armament including cannons. However, its range and ammunition were short.

## MESSERSCHMITT BF 110

Fast and well armed, the Bf 110 was a long-range fighter that was effective at low-level attacks but lacked manoeuvrability against RAF fighters.

## JUNKERS JU 88

Although it was vulnerable to RAF fighters, this important medium bomber was nevertheless versatile and was capable of dive-bombing.

## BOULTON PAUL DEFIANT

A distinctive two-seat fighter with a four-gun turret, the Defiant had no forward firing armament and was vulnerable to enemy fighters. It was quickly withdrawn from the battle.

## DORNIER DO 17

Designed as a mail aircraft, Dornier bombers were highly vulnerable. They could only carry 1,000 kilograms of bombs and had a limited range and armament.

## JUNKERS JU 87 STUKA

A highly successful, intimidating dive-bomber in France and Poland where they had air superiority, the Stuka fell foul of RAF fighters over Britain and were gradually withdrawn.

## BRISTOL BLENHEIM

This light fighter-bomber suffered heavy losses during the Battle of France but it was better suited as a night fighter and flew missions to bomb German-occupied airfields.

## GLOSTER GLADIATOR

An anachronistic biplane, the Gladiator was the least numerically important fighter during the battle. Based at RAF Roborough, Devon Gladiators intercepted Heinkel bombers with limited success.

## HEINKEL HE 111

Cursed with poor armament, small bomb load (2,000 kilograms) and slow speed, the Heinkel's only plus was its structural strength that could absorb hundreds of bullets.

200mph

300mph

400mph

300mph

200mph

Maximum level flight speed

# DEFENDING BRITAIN'S SKIES

## JULY-OCTOBER 1940

RAF FIGHTER COMMAND WAS ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY DEFEND ITS HOME TERRITORY BY AN EFFICIENT SYSTEM OF AIRFIELDS, DIVIDED INTO REGIONAL OPERATIONAL FIGHTER 'GROUPS' AND AN INNOVATIVE RADAR SYSTEM THAT COULD DETECT ENEMY AIRCRAFT EVEN BEFORE THEY LEFT CONTINENTAL AIRSPACE

- FIGHTER COMMAND BASES
- ⊕ PAUL FARNES & 501 SQDN
- ⊕ LUFTWAFFE FIGHTER BASES
- LUFTWAFFE BOMBER BASES
- MAJOR TOWN/CITY
- - - RANGE OF LOW LEVEL RADAR
- - - RANGE OF HIGH LEVEL RADAR
- ⋯ RAF GROUP BOUNDARIES
- RANGE OF BF109
- - - LUFTFLOTTE BOUNDARIES



sit along the coast and watch them come over. They would say things like, 'You've got 250-plus bombers. We think they're Heinkels or a mixture of Heinkels that are possibly escorted by 109s.' We knew what we were going to be faced with each time we took off but we didn't always meet up with the enemy. The sky is a big place and although you're guided by the ground controllers, it's not that easy to see other aircraft quickly."

Farnes praises the 'Many' on the ground that helped 'the Few' in the skies, "They were very 'pro' and without them you were lost. If anything went wrong with your aircraft, the ground crew would work on it all night if necessary to get it ready and back to serviceability. You can't speak highly enough of them, they were marvellous. And so were the WAAFs (Women's Auxiliary Air Force), the entire backup was good. The whole organisation was pretty efficient and it worked very well."

### Chaos in the skies

Compared to the efficiency on the ground, aerial combat bordered on anarchy, "You took off as a squadron but if you met the enemy you broke up. Once you found the enemy and got stuck into him, you were trying to shoot at the bombers and probably trying to keep an eye open to see where the 109s were coming down, which they usually were. It was a free for all. There wasn't a regimented thing when you got in a certain position. You just broke up and whipped into the aircraft trying to find something to shoot at. You'd give them a burst and then break away and you'd be constantly looking."

Precision targeting was impossible, "As far as I was concerned, you just shot at the aircraft. There are people who will tell you that they shot at the petrol tanks but that's a load of rubbish because you just shot and hoped perhaps that you hit the engine or whatever else was there."

*Young men, usually with minimal training, made up the majority of the RAF fighter pilots during the Battle of Britain*





This artist's depiction of the Battle of Britain shows Hawker Hurricanes attempt to stop a bomber formation protected by Bf 109s



You couldn't sit back and pick your target, that wasn't a feasible proposition."

The average age of an RAF pilot during the Battle of Britain was just 20 years old. At 21, Farnes was slightly more experienced, and this contributed to his survival, "I was fairly experienced compared to a lot of the chaps. I'd had good training and had flown the Hurricane for quite a few hours before the Battle of Britain, whereas a lot of the new young pilots had only got about two or three hours. It was useless, you really had to have flown a Hurricane for a few hours to get used to it."

**"THE AVERAGE AGE OF AN RAF PILOT DURING THE BATTLE WAS JUST 20. AT 21, FARNES WAS SLIGHTLY MORE EXPERIENCED, AND THIS CONTRIBUTED TO HIS SURVIVAL"**

Flight during combat required multitasking skills that many young pilots didn't possess, "When you're fighting in combat, you're throwing the airplane around, you're not just sitting straight and level firing your guns. You're doing all sorts; trying to avoid other aircraft or trying to get into position to shoot at something. It was a continual battle but these chaps hadn't got a clue. They had hardly ever flown a Hurricane, let alone turned one upside down. I'm afraid they were the ones that went first; we lost a lot of our young chaps. They were easy pickings for the 109s."

### Enemy encounters

Farnes would occasionally encounter German pilots in remarkable circumstances. He remembers: "My RT or oxygen didn't work properly once, so I had to return to base. I lost height, came down to about 450 metres and headed back towards Kenley. I was flying along a railway line and suddenly coming towards me was a Ju 88 German aircraft. I thought 'Good God!' so I whipped out, repositioned myself and managed to get behind him. I gave him a couple of bursts and he crashed at Gatwick, just on the point between the airport and the racecourse."

Farnes landed and came face to face with the enemy, "The station commander took me over to meet the pilot. I went to shake hands with him but he wouldn't shake hands. It was a natural thing to do as far as I was concerned but he wasn't interested. One of the gunners was alright but the other was killed. It was particularly



poignant for me because I did all my training at Gatwick so it was quite a thing to feel that I shot down an aircraft that crashed there.”

On another occasion, Farnes had an encounter with a German pilot in mid-air, “I’d shot down a 109 and the pilot bailed out. I watched him coming down and the parachute opened. I waved to him and got a wave back! I watched him land and I saw the farmers coming out to him but I don’t know what happened afterwards because I had to return to base.”

Despite these extraordinary events, Farnes is realistic about the majority of his aerial combats, “There were other times of course where you didn’t shoot them down and you just damaged them possibly. You could see that you were hitting them with your guns but you didn’t get them.”

As for his own aircraft, Farnes highly regards the Hurricane, “It was marvellous. It’s a pity that the Spitfire always gets all the credit although I can understand it to some extent. People will ask, ‘What did you fly?’ and you say ‘a Hurricane’ and they will reply, ‘Oh...did you fly Spitfires?’ I did fly Spitfires, but not during the Battle of Britain.”

Although it is less famous than the Spitfire, Farnes knew the Hurricane’s virtues, “The Hurricane did all the work and it shot down far more aircraft than the Spitfires. It was a very good aircraft and would take an awful lot more punishment. It was a wooden aircraft really; the

## “I’D SHOT DOWN A 109 AND THE PILOT BAILED OUT. I WATCHED HIM COMING DOWN AND THE PARACHUTE OPENED. I WAVED TO HIM AND GOT A WAVE BACK!”

framework was wood and canvas whereas the Spitfire was all-metal. I can understand that the Spitfire got a name: it was faster, probably a more beautiful aircraft and wonderful for aerobatics but if you flew Hurricanes you were happy. Funnily enough the whole time I flew Hurricanes I didn’t think ‘Oh I wish I’d got a Spitfire!’ I was very happy with my Hurricane and flew it all the way.”

Farnes also respected the German aircraft and pilots, “The Me 109 was very fast, it could certainly go higher than the Hurricane. I think some of the pilots were very good too. What a lot of people don’t realise is that it’s very different fighting over your own country than having to go to another country to bomb or fight. I think considering that, the Germans were pretty good, they came over and got stuck in. They didn’t turn tail and run when they saw us coming. It was a pretty fair fight.”

During the battle, Farnes recognised that the Germans did have the edge in one respect, “Where the Germans did have the advantage was they had cannons and we had machine guns. The difference between the cannons in the

Me 109s and the poor little bullets in our guns was pretty substantial. If a cannon shell hit you it could do enormous damage. In fact it was most likely that you would have to bail out if you were hit, whereas with the machine guns, we had to get them in a vital place to be sure of getting them down, which was not always very practical.”

### **Camaraderie and “enjoyment”**

RAF pilots became increasingly exhausted as they fended off wave after wave of German aircraft. Farnes was no exception, “You didn’t get an awful amount of time off. On a typical day, we’d be over at the dispersals by around 5am and we’d stay out there. On a busy day, my logbook states that we would do six sorties in one day when things were really hotting up. You’d get tired but you could doze off at dispersal quite often.”

Despite the early hours, Farnes and his fellow pilots were given support from the WAAFs, “There were two sergeant WAAFs who used to come in and they’d make us hot tea with sugar and they’d also give us toast with beef dripping. That was lovely and it was completely voluntary.



Left: Now aged 98, Paul Farnes is one of the last of ‘the Few’ and one of only two surviving ‘ace’ pilots from the Battle of Britain

They just did it out of the goodness of their hearts; they didn't have to. That's sort of the thing that went on, that camaraderie between everybody, we were all helping each other."

There were also good relations between the pilots, "The sergeants and the officers got on well together. If a sergeant was experienced enough he'd probably lead a section. In 501 Squadron, we were all there for each other, it was a wonderful atmosphere."

Farnes has often stated that he "enjoyed" the battle, "It's difficult to describe. Everywhere in the Battle of Britain we had marvellous airplanes, wonderful aircraft, you flew several times a day and that's what you wanted to do. You were doing it for a reason too; you were doing it to protect your country. I knew that there was a chance that I was going to get shot down but chaps like myself had got

**"YOU FLEW SEVERAL TIMES A DAY AND THAT'S WHAT YOU WANTED TO DO. YOU WERE DOING IT FOR A REASON TOO; YOU WERE DOING IT TO PROTECT YOUR COUNTRY"**



*Farnes flew Hawker Hurricanes throughout the battles of France and Britain and states, "If you flew Hurricanes, you were happy"*



*"Scramble!" RAF pilots run to their Hurricanes to grapple with approaching enemy aircraft. Paul Farnes flew as many as six sorties a day during the battle*

quite a lot of experience because we'd been in France and knew what the form was. Flying with a bit of excitement thrown in, that's how I found it anyway. Altogether I thought it was quite enjoyable. I think one or two of the chaps did too. For instance, the CO would quite often pick members of the squadron that had to be at 'Readiness'. The ones who weren't picked would be pretty fed up and you'd think, "Why can't I go?" I'm sure one or two must have felt "Well thank God I'm not going!" but a lot of us were quite happy to go."

As for the psychological strain, Farnes was largely unaffected, "I can't honestly say that I was ever frightened in the Battle of Britain. Even when you saw the enemy you'd see 200-300 bombers and about 100-200 Me 109s and there were only 12 of you but I never felt frightened and neither did a lot of the chaps I knew. You did get a few who had 'LMF', a 'lack of moral fibre' but as far as I know, we only had one chap who had it in the squadron and he eventually got himself shot down because he would hang back."

Despite the unfavourable odds, Farnes never thought the Germans would prevail, "I never remember anyone thinking that we were going to lose, I don't think it ever occurred to us. People will ask you about what your view was of the battle but as sergeant pilots we probably weren't 'in the know' as much as the officers.

**“DESPITE THEIR SMALL NUMBERS, ‘THE FEW’ HAD FORCED HITLER TO ULTIMATELY FIGHT A TWO-FRONT WAR AND NOT ONLY SAVED BRITAIN BUT ENABLED IT TO BECOME A FORTIFIED LAUNCH-PAD FOR THE ALLIED LIBERATION OF EUROPE”**

The senior officers were in the officers' mess and things were possibly said that never reached our ears. People ask me "What did you think about the future?" but I had no idea. That type of thing didn't occur to me but then I'm probably a bit dim!"

Farnes's optimistic assessment bore fruit on 17 September when Adolf Hitler reluctantly cancelled Operation Sea Lion. Despite this, attacks continued and although historians have 'dated' the end of the battle at 31 October 1940, Farnes points out it was far from clear at the time, "As far as most of us were concerned, it was still going on. At the official 'end' of the Battle of Britain we were still fighting and shooting down enemy aircraft, so I don't know where they picked up the dates from. I still think someone pulled the numbers out of a hat but there we are."

**Significance of the RAF**

Regardless of when the fighting ended, the cost was heavy for both sides. 501 Squadron itself suffered more aircrew deaths than any other squadron during the battle with 19 personnel killed. Overall, RAF Fighter Command lost around 1,012 aircraft and 537 pilots while the Luftwaffe lost around 1,918 aircraft and 2,662 aircrew. Churchill had already been quick to recognise the efforts of the RAF and famously paid tribute to the pilots on 20 August 1940,



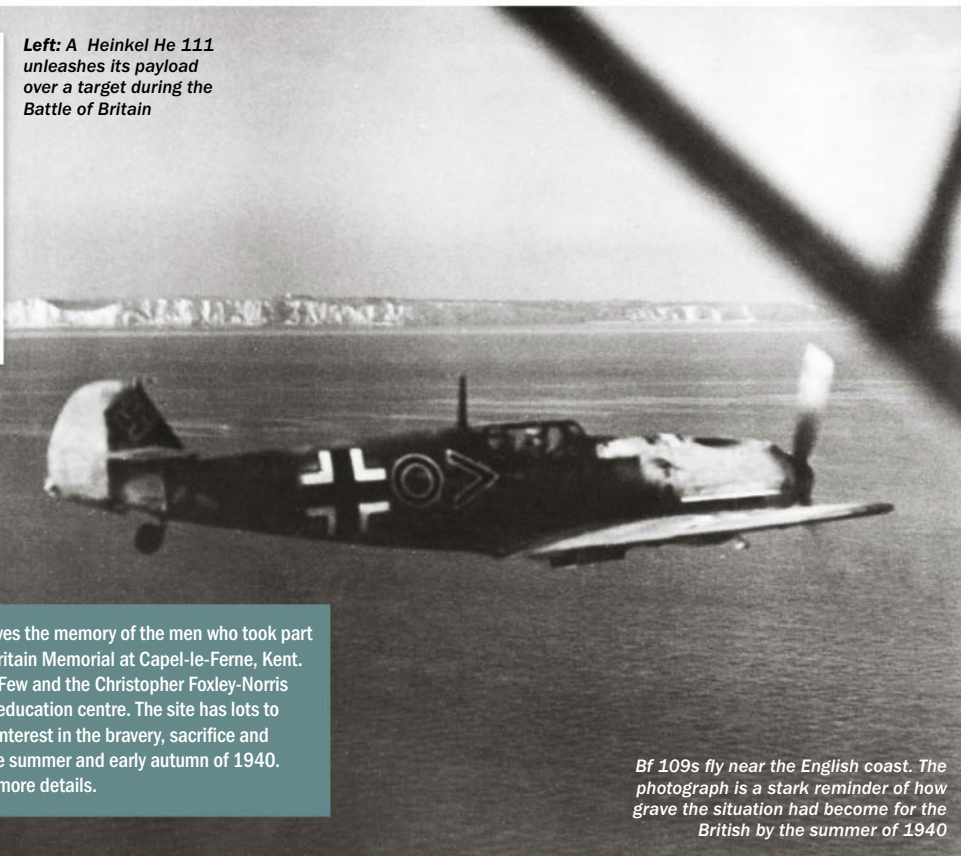
*Above: Paul Farnes (far left) is part of a very small band of surviving pilots from the Battle of Britain but their achievements have never been forgotten*

"Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." Sadly, the war claimed the lives of a further 814 of 'the Few' after the battle, leaving only 1,579 survivors by September 1945.

Farnes's combat record during the battle was impressive. Between July-November 1940 he destroyed three Junkers Ju 87 'Stukas', one Dornier Do 17, a Bf 109 and a Junkers Ju 88. He also damaged six additional enemy aircraft in addition to two 'probable' victories against Bf 109s. Farnes's total of eight confirmed victories from the battles of France and Britain qualified him as an 'ace' (five or more aerial victories) and he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM) on 22 October 1940, before being commissioned as an officer. Farnes remembers that his decoration was somewhat overdue, "Other chaps who had joined the squadron at the same time as me but who were already commissioned or were after they joined became DFCs (Distinguished Flying Cross). I



*Left: A Heinkel He 111 unleashes its payload over a target during the Battle of Britain*

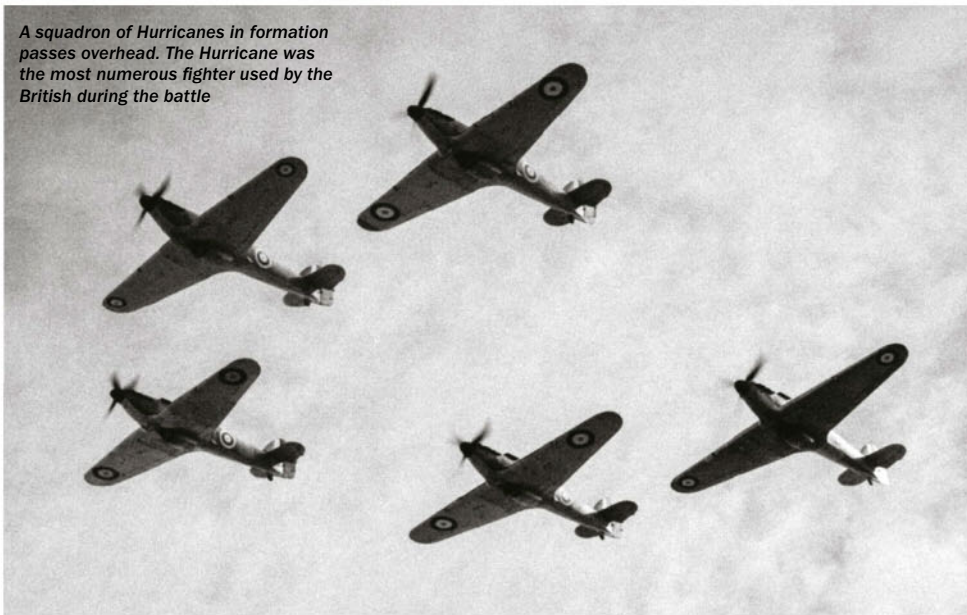


*Bf 109s fly near the English coast. The photograph is a stark reminder of how grave the situation had become for the British by the summer of 1940*



The Battle of Britain Memorial Trust preserves the memory of the men who took part in the battle and looks after the Battle of Britain Memorial at Capel-le-Ferne, Kent. This includes the National Memorial to the Few and the Christopher Foxley-Norris Memorial Wall as well as a new visitor and education centre. The site has lots to offer all visitors, particularly those with an interest in the bravery, sacrifice and heroism shown by the men of the RAF in the summer and early autumn of 1940. See [www.battleofbritainmemorial.org](http://www.battleofbritainmemorial.org) for more details.

A squadron of Hurricanes in formation passes overhead. The Hurricane was the most numerous fighter used by the British during the battle



in the RAF, retiring in 1958 as a squadron leader but retaining the rank of wing commander.

Today Farnes is part of a dwindling band of survivors from the battle, which he has observed from the annual service for the battle at Westminster Abbey, "It's a wonderful service and it's absolutely packed. Our numbers are diminishing all the time, I think last year there were only about six or seven of us there." Nevertheless, despite the passage and inevitability of time it is still worth remembering the significance of the summer of 1940.

Despite their small numbers, 'the Few' had forced Hitler to ultimately fight a two-front war and not only saved Britain but enabled it to become a fortified launch-pad for the Allied liberation of Europe. Clichés in history are generally to be avoided, but on this occasion the Battle of Britain gave renewed hope for the future and crucially proved that the Nazi war machine was not invincible. For these reasons alone, Churchill's description of Britain's 'finest hour' was not unqualified.

Although Farnes admits that today the battle is "not something that I analyse," his final thoughts on how it felt to take part in a critical turning point in history were also among his first. In October 1940, then Sergeant Pilot Farnes wrote a poem in the dispersal hut at RAF Kenley. Below the aerial carnage, he movingly wrote about what the Battle of Britain really meant for those who fought in it: anticipation, duty, loss and the hope for a better tomorrow.

don't like to say it but it was with considerably less in the way of victories than I had in terms of shooting down aircraft. But then again, I did get it pinned on me by the king at Buckingham Palace, which was nice."

Farnes not only met George VI but later recalled the meeting to Queen Elizabeth II at the Battle of Britain Memorial in 2015, "When I met the queen at Capel-le-Ferne I said, 'Ma'am, I'd like you to know that your father gave me

this medal. I don't polish it because it might have his fingerprints on it!' She laughed and said 'Maybe it has!'"

After the battle, Farnes became an instructor before being posted to the Middle East. In 1942, he fought during the Siege of Malta with 229 Squadron and damaged a further two Junker Ju 88s, one Bf 109 and two unidentified aircraft. After a spell in Iraq as a staff officer, Farnes returned to Britain in early 1945 and remained

# READINESS AT DAWN

BY PAUL FARNES

COMPOSED IN OCTOBER 1940, THIS ABRIDGED POEM IS USED WITH THE AUTHOR'S KIND PERMISSION

Night has shed its heavy cloak  
And the stars 'ere put to flight.  
The dawn is gently breaking  
With a pale and misty light.

But we got up some time ago  
To herald in the morn,  
For our orders of the night before  
Said 'Readiness at Dawn'.

We go round to our aircraft  
To see they're in good state,  
And then there's nothing left to do  
But settle down and wait.

When we're sitting round dispersal  
To do battle in the sky  
I often stop to wonder  
If today someone will die.

It may be Bob it may be Bill  
It may be Morf or Mac  
Because as like as not this day  
Someone won't come back.

Suddenly the 'phone rings,  
It's the operations line  
And every man is on his feet  
And the same thought's in each mind.

The order comes to 'Scramble'  
The engines start as one  
We rush out to our aircraft  
And the battle has begun.

The fight is soon at fever pitch,  
It's each man on his own  
And deeds of courage are performed  
Of which nothing will be known.

The ground crews on the tarmac  
Watch our return with anxious heart  
And find that three have not come back  
Who went up at the start.

Bob rings up sometime later  
To tell us he's O.K.  
He baled out over Tunbridge  
But that is all he'll say.

The news of Hugh and Johnny  
Came through to us next day,  
They'd crashed in flames near Dover;  
There's not much one can say.

But someone takes a long drawn breath  
And with unsteady voice  
Says "If they'd known they had to go  
It would have been their choice."

And when we sit around again  
To go up and fight once more  
My thoughts oft times stray far away  
To my home before the war.

And when I think of peace in England  
And all it means to me  
Moisture dims my weary eyes  
And I find it hard to see.



Above: Sergeant Pilot Paul Farnes (seated on chair, left) with other pilots of 501 Squadron during the Battle of Britain. Sitting next to Farnes on the ground is his friend Pilot Officer R C 'Bob' Dafforn who was later killed on active service in 1943



Aircrews would work tirelessly around the clock to ensure the RAF fighters were always ready for combat

Images: Alamy, Getty





## Great Battles

# GOLDEN SPURS

WORDS MARC DESANTIS

At Courtrai in July 1302, an intrepid band of common Flemish foot soldiers would smash a proud army of French knights

### COURTRAI, BELGIUM 11 JULY 1302

In the 14th century, a bitter conflict erupted between the County of Flanders and the Kingdom of France. King Edward I of England, nominally a vassal of King Philip IV of France, had gone to war with his French overlord and landed with an army in Flanders in 1297. His stay was unproductive and he left the next year after signing a truce with Philip. Flanders had sought independence from France for years, and now found itself without an ally. In 1300, French forces invaded.

At this time, the wealthy city of Bruges was torn by civil strife as the wealthy, oligarchic party favouring France and those supporting the commons and the liberty of Flanders came to blows. A French force was sent to occupy Bruges, but on 18 May 1302, the common people rose against the French and massacred 120 of them. This bloody deed, known to posterity as the Matins of Bruges, had to be avenged by Philip IV, and an army under the command of Robert, Count of Artois, was despatched to Flanders to enact punishment.

As war approached, other towns and cities in Flanders joined the struggle of liberation against France. The Flemish knew all too well what was in store for them. They had risen up against the strongest king in Europe, one who could call upon the service of multitudes of heavily armoured knights astride powerful chargers. But the Flemish possessed high morale, as the men they would fight beside were their fellow guildsmen – weavers, fullers and shearers – who would fight hard to preserve the freedom of their home city.

Luckily for the townsmen, the rebellion would gain the support and competent leadership of Guy of Namur, the son of Guy of Dampierre, Count of Flanders, who had been imprisoned

by Philip in 1300 after a failed revolt. William of Jülich, another Flemish nobleman and a strong leader, similarly sought to exact retribution on King Philip for the captivity of two of his own uncles. They began to liberate Flanders from the occupying garrisons of the French king, and one in particular, that of Courtrai. The Flemish tried to capture the castle in Courtrai, but the garrison resisted all efforts to take it. By late June, the whole of the Flemish army was busy besieging Courtrai, and the gleaming French army came up to rescue the trapped garrison. A battle for the ages was now in the offing.

The Flemish troops that the French knights would meet head-on were mostly militiamen. They were not haphazard collections of indifferent soldiers, but highly motivated trained infantry. They had good weaponry, including tall pikes that outreached the lances of the knights, hooked spears with which to pull a man from his horse, and above all, the goedendag, a 1.5-metre-long mace that ended with a vicious spike at its business end. Others carried swords and falchions – heavy chopping blades optimised for slicing off limbs and cleaving skulls. Many

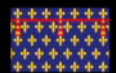
### OPPOSING FORCES



#### FLANDERS

**LEADERS** Guy of Namur, William of Jülich, John of Renesse  
**INFANTRY** 8,000  
**CAVALRY** 10  
**CROSSBOWMEN** <1,000  
**RESERVES** 500

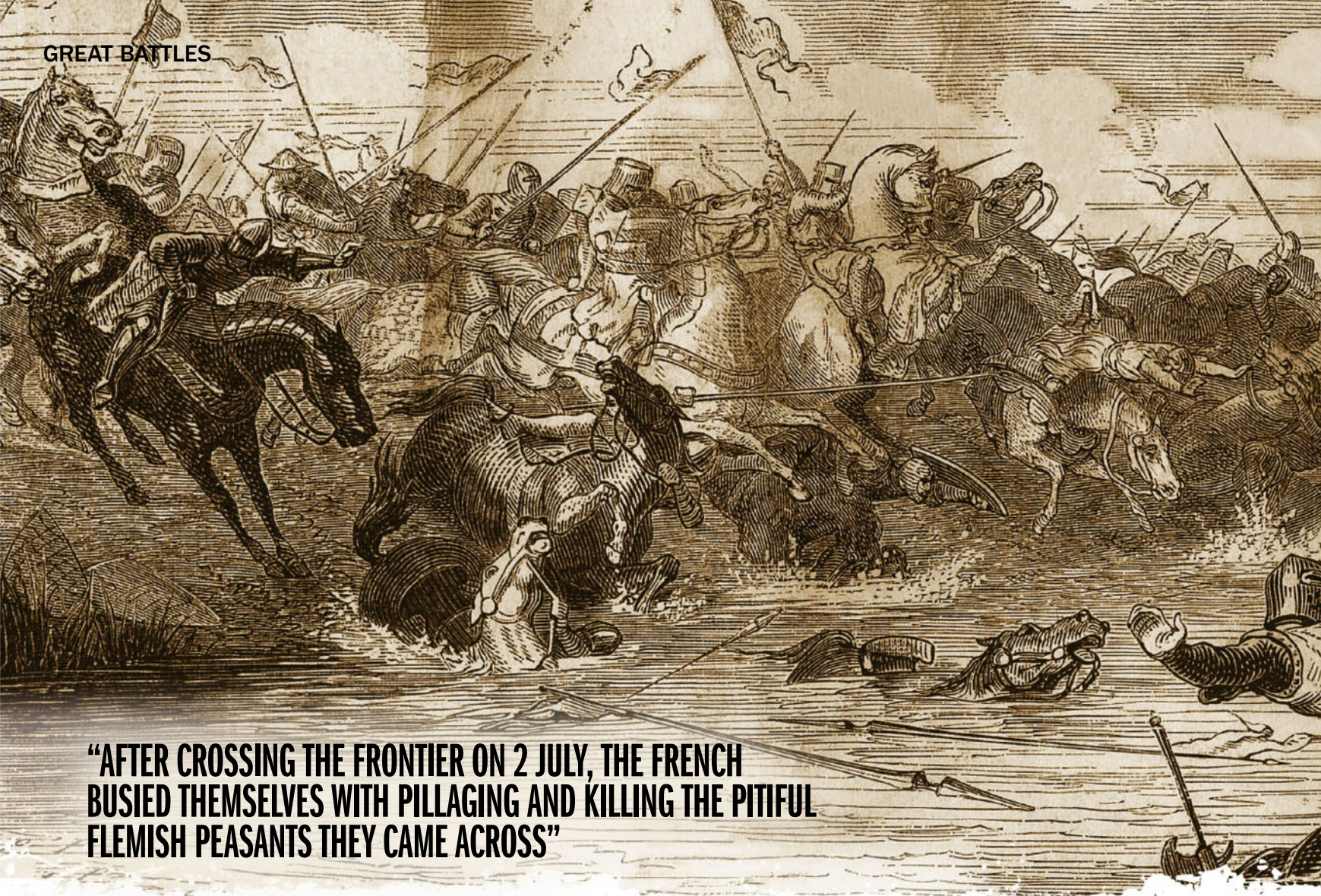
vs



#### FRANCE

**LEADERS** Robert, Count of Artois  
**INFANTRY** 3,000  
**CAVALRY** 2,500  
**CROSSBOWMEN** 1,000

Left: This embellished image, by the pre-eminent French illustrator Jean Fouquet, depicts the French gaining the upper hand, ignoring the actual outcome



**“AFTER CROSSING THE FRONTIER ON 2 JULY, THE FRENCH BUSIED THEMSELVES WITH PILLAGING AND KILLING THE PITIFUL FLEMISH PEASANTS THEY CAME ACROSS”**

also wore open-faced steel helmets, mailed gloves, stout mail armour or coats of plates, and shields, making them the equivalent of heavy infantry, something not often seen on a European battlefield in the Middle Ages.

The Flemish would need every bit of courage and skill from their foot soldiers if they were to prevail. There were around 8,000 men in the Flemish army before Courtrai, most of who were infantry militia. From Bruges came some 3,000 under the command of William of Jülich, 2,400 or so travelling from the Franc of Bruges under Guy of Namur and 500 men came from Zeeland under John of Renesse.

Knights among the Flemish were scarce – just ten are said to have partaken in the battle by the anonymously penned *Annals Of Ghent*, which recorded the history of Flanders from 1297 to 1310. Though a small force of 320 cavalry composed of rich burghers from Bruges were also ready to do battle, these men, like the knights and the militiamen, were all going to fight the upcoming battle on foot.

In addition to these, two groups of men from Ypres and Ghent came to fight beside their Flemish brethren. Both cities were still under

the control of pro-French parties, but these men refused to stand by while Bruges fought for its life. From Ypres came 500 men and some crossbowmen, while from Ghent marched around 700 militiamen under Jan Borluut.

### The French arrive

Completely forgetting the ideals of chivalry, which condemned harming non-combatants, after crossing the frontier on 2 July the French busied themselves with pillaging and killing the pitiful Flemish peasants they came across, thinking that by the application of ruthless violence they would cow the Flemings. Having spent their time marauding, the French trickled into Courtrai over two days, 9-10 July, and found that they could not relieve the besieged town, so would have to fight a pitched battle. They made camp some 9.5 kilometres to the south, and then cast about for suitable terrain on which to fight with their horses. They had some help in finding it. At Courtrai castle, the French stuck therein passed signals to their countrymen beyond the Flemish siege lines. They directed Robert of Artois, the army's general, to look to the Groeningeveld, the Groeninge plain, where he might find a proper battle.

The Flemish made their camp to the north of Courtrai, and on the morning of 11 July 1302, the men of each side, all devoutly Christian in this age of faith, said their prayers. The Flemings received absolution from their priests, and grimly waited for the French to make the first move.

The Flemish positions ran along the marshy ground beside the Groeninge Brook, which made its way to the Leie River, forming their left flank and behind this barrier stood the men of East Flanders. To their rear lay the moats and walls of the castle of Courtrai, the Leie and the Groeninge Abbey.

To the fore was the Great Brook, some three metres in width, which linked the moats with Groeninge Brook. This was defended by the militia drawn from West Flanders. Anchoring the right wing of the Flemish line were the militiamen of Bruges, while the most courageous and well-armed Flemings were placed in the first two ranks. The Ypres contingent was tasked with preventing a breakout of the French holding out in Courtrai castle in the Flemish rear, and the men of Zeeland under Renesse formed the reserve behind the centre of the Flemish army. Flemish crossbowmen stood to attention in front

*Below: Fragments of an original goedendag used in the battle, preserved at the Kortrijk 1302 museum, Belgium*





of their line, with the crossbowmen of the enemy doing the same before their own.

Guy of Namur rode up and down the Flemish line to give encouragement to his men. Wearing an open-faced helmet that matched those on the heads of the common militiamen, he shouted, "A cloud now covers the sun; we shall therefore have no difficulty from its rays. We shall gain victory, I am certain of this. Beware noble Flemings! Stand firm because the enemy will ride towards you with much force. Call upon the help of God. He will certainly stand by us." He dismounted thereafter and took his place on foot among the tight ranks of common soldiery.

William of Jülich also spoke to his troops before the fighting commenced, unfurled his banner and dismounted to fight on foot just as Guy had. By doing so, and having sent their horses away, they showed that they would endure whatever fate had in store for the common men of Flanders. John of Renesse, the commander of the Flemish reserves, said to the men in the front ranks: "Do not let the enemy break through your ranks. Do not be frightened. Kill both horse and man. 'Flanders, the Lion', is our battle cry. When the enemy attacks Guy's corps, we will come and help you from behind. Every man who penetrates your ranks or breaks through them shall remain there, dead."

According to the *Annals Of Ghent*, the Flemings were in a merciless mood before the battle because the French had slaughtered their way north during their invasion. The French

**Above:** *The long reach of the Flemish weapons enabled the Flemings to engage the French knights with near impunity, as they struggled across the marshy terrain of the battlefield*

had "...even beheaded the images of saints in the churches as though they were alive, or chopped off their limbs." This effort to frighten the Flemings was to no avail, however, but "provoked them to still greater indignation and rage." An extraordinary order was given out to the Flemings as they waited for combat to start. No man among them would be permitted to take any loot during the battle whatsoever, and further, that no one should take any French nobleman prisoner. Should any man disobey these prohibitions, the order continued, he would immediately be put to death by his comrades in arms.

The French on the other side of the field comprised a glorious host, with the flower of the chivalry of their kingdom mounted on caparisoned horses and bearing proud banners displaying their heraldry for all to see. The French plan was a direct one. Two waves would go on the attack, one after the other, with each wave formed of four 'battles'. A third group of two battles would compose the army's reserve. It is thought that there were no fewer than 2,500 knights and squires, all astride chargers,



*Robert II was laid to rest in the Basilica of Saint Denis, located in Paris*

supplemented by infantry drawn from across Europe. There were some 2,000 light infantry, 1,000 pikemen and 1,000 crossbowmen, with some mercenaries coming even from Genoa and Spain.

The French were no doubt outnumbered by the Flemings by a substantial margin, but in the calculus of Medieval warfare, this was of little account. To the Medieval mind, a knight on horseback was worth ten lesser men on foot. Such an equation may seem to be unforgivably arrogant, and such arrogance did indeed characterise knights by and large, but there was some basis for their self-confidence. Infantry had been the dominant force on the battlefield during the Roman era but had been in decline ever since. Now the knight had reigned supreme.

However, that equation had begun to change during the 13th century, if not before. Cities, especially those in Italy and Flanders, began to grow as trade revived. Their populations swelled and this made it possible to recruit larger numbers of foot soldiers with at least some degree of training. The knight was not obsolete by any means, but the days when he could ride down a mob of ill-equipped and untrained peasants were coming to an end.

### The French switch tactics

There were some among the French force who had second thoughts about charging straightaway at the Flemish militiamen. The sight of the relatively well-armed and obviously disciplined Flemings drawn up in close ranks behind the brooks could not help but make some doubt the wisdom of a head-on attack.

Most of the French leaders present, however, were eager to exact vengeance for the Bruges massacre and thought that the Flemings had made themselves vulnerable to being crushed all at once. They urged an immediate attack on the enemy before the Flemings thought better of the situation and took off.

Robert sent a herald to scout out the Flemish army that morning to discover which noblemen might make valuable prisoner if captured. The herald found few men of any note, as the army was mainly composed of commoners of no social standing.

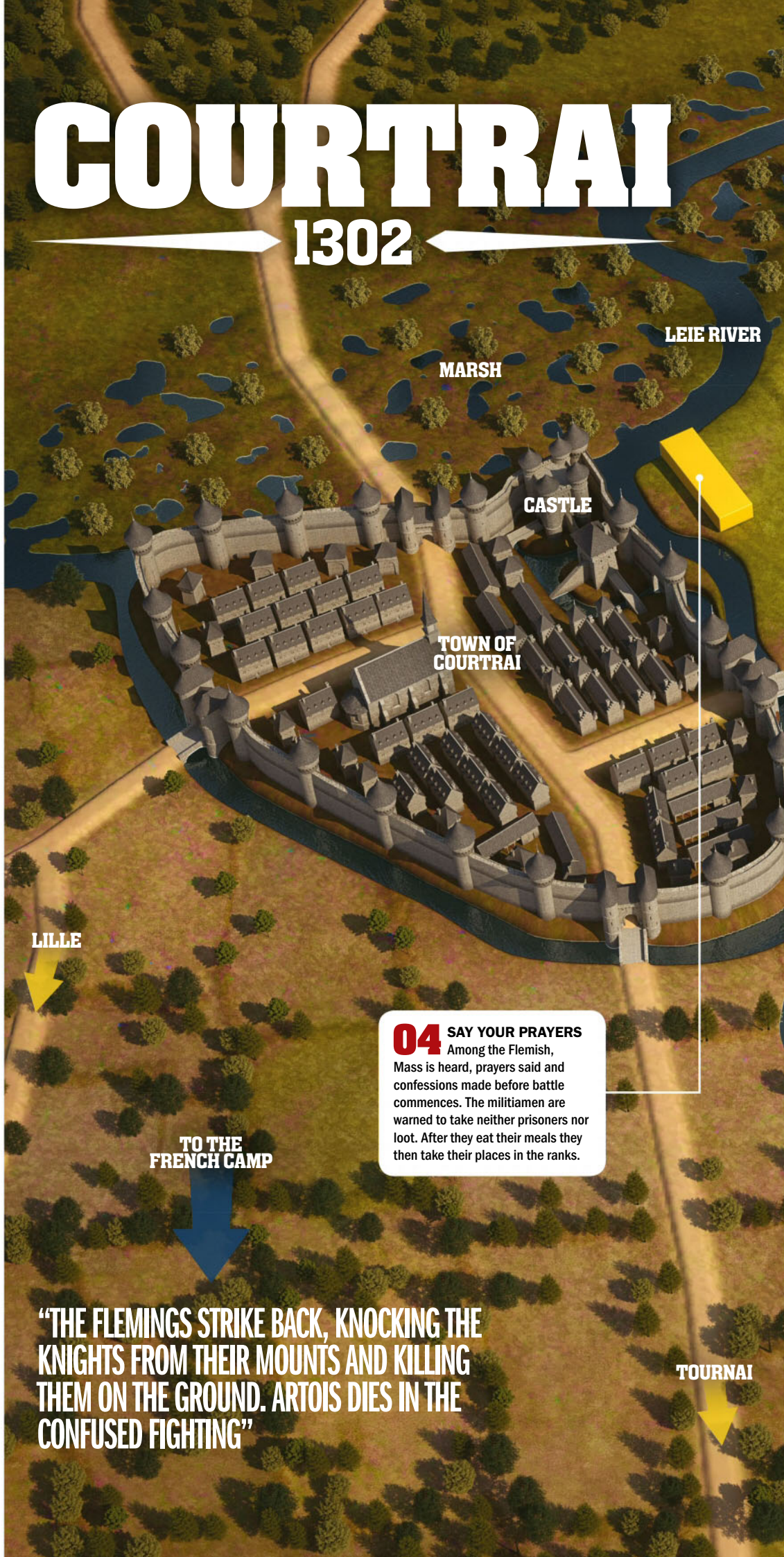
Apart from those of Guy of Namur and William of Jülich, he did spy a single banner of interest – a gold and red design with a rampant lion emblazoned upon it, belonging to John of Renesse, leader of the men from Zeeland. When the French captains heard this, Godfrey, the uncle of the Duke of Brabant and commander of 500 knights from that district, warned “It is my belief that we should most beware of the knight who bears the lion banner... John of Renesse; in all the world there are not six men who are his equals in military skill.” With this in mind, Godfrey urged that the attack be delayed until



Left: The coat of arms of the van Renesse family. John of Renesse was feared by the French for his military prowess

# COURTRAI

1302



LEIE RIVER

MARSH

CASTLE

TOWN OF COURTRAI

LILLE

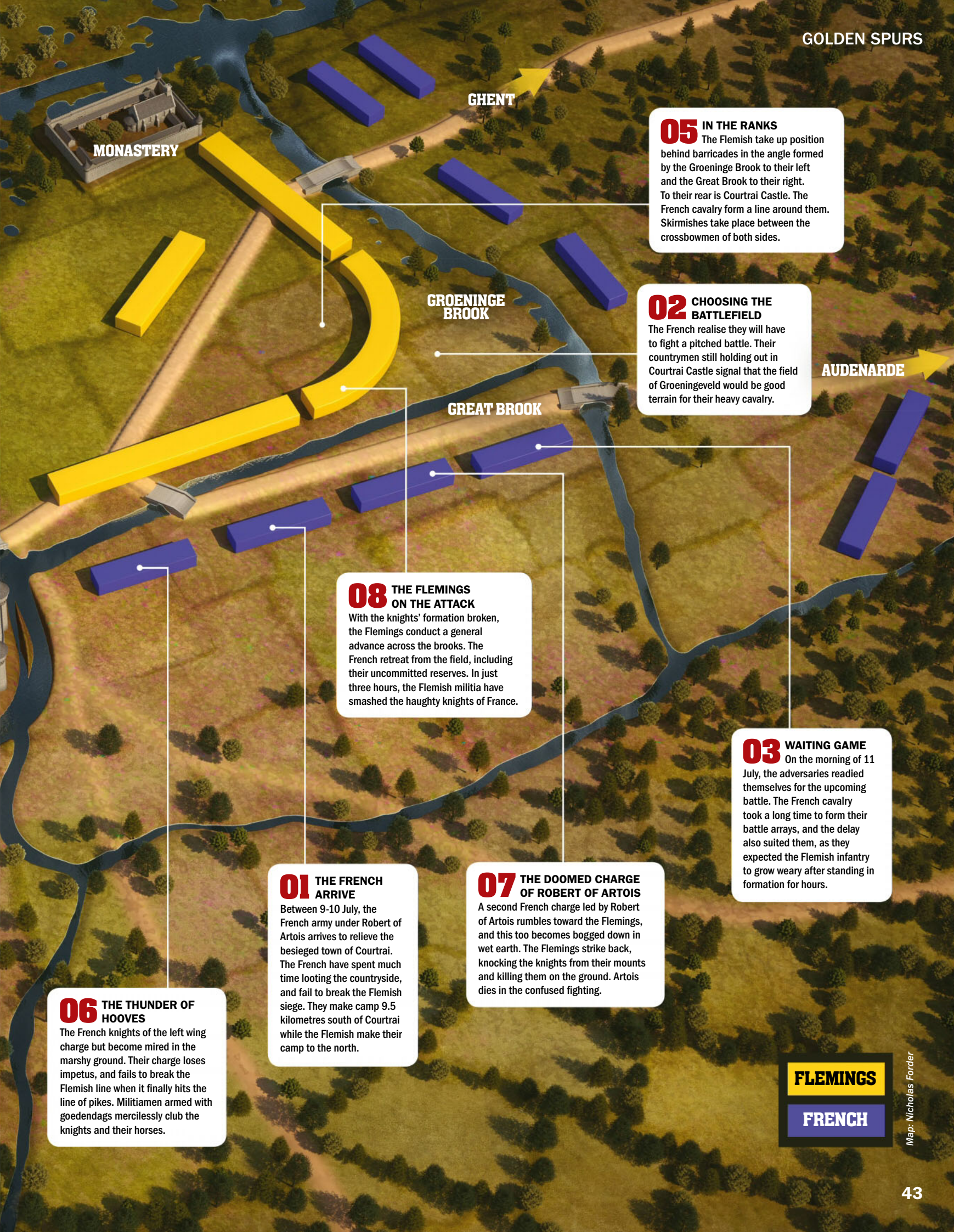
TO THE FRENCH CAMP

TOURNAI

## 04 SAY YOUR PRAYERS

Among the Flemish, Mass is heard, prayers said and confessions made before battle commences. The militiamen are warned to take neither prisoners nor loot. After they eat their meals they then take their places in the ranks.

“THE FLEMINGS STRIKE BACK, KNOCKING THE KNIGHTS FROM THEIR MOUNTS AND KILLING THEM ON THE GROUND. ARTOIS DIES IN THE CONFUSED FIGHTING”



MONASTERY

GHENT

**05 IN THE RANKS**

The Flemish take up position behind barricades in the angle formed by the Groeninge Brook to their left and the Great Brook to their right. To their rear is Courtrai Castle. The French cavalry form a line around them. Skirmishes take place between the crossbowmen of both sides.

GROENINGE BROOK

**02 CHOOSING THE BATTLEFIELD**

The French realise they will have to fight a pitched battle. Their countrymen still holding out in Courtrai Castle signal that the field of Groeningeveld would be good terrain for their heavy cavalry.

GREAT BROOK

AUDENARDE

**08 THE FLEMINGS ON THE ATTACK**

With the knights' formation broken, the Flemings conduct a general advance across the brooks. The French retreat from the field, including their uncommitted reserves. In just three hours, the Flemish militia have smashed the haughty knights of France.

**03 WAITING GAME**

On the morning of 11 July, the adversaries readied themselves for the upcoming battle. The French cavalry took a long time to form their battle arrays, and the delay also suited them, as they expected the Flemish infantry to grow weary after standing in formation for hours.

**01 THE FRENCH ARRIVE**

Between 9-10 July, the French army under Robert of Artois arrives to relieve the besieged town of Courtrai. The French have spent much time looting the countryside, and fail to break the Flemish siege. They make camp 9.5 kilometres south of Courtrai while the Flemish make their camp to the north.

**07 THE DOOMED CHARGE OF ROBERT OF ARTOIS**

A second French charge led by Robert of Artois rumbles toward the Flemings, and this too becomes bogged down in wet earth. The Flemings strike back, knocking the knights from their mounts and killing them on the ground. Artois dies in the confused fighting.

**06 THE THUNDER OF HOOVES**

The French knights of the left wing charge but become mired in the marshy ground. Their charge loses impetus, and fails to break the Flemish line when it finally hits the line of pikes. Militiamen armed with goedendags mercilessly club the knights and their horses.

FLEMINGS

FRENCH

Map: Nicholas Forder



Located in Bruges's town hall, this painting shows the jubilant Flemings returning from their victory on the battlefield

the next day when the Flemish would tire from waiting in position for so long.

This sober counsel was, however, dismissed furiously by Robert. "What can such common people do against us? Even if there are many of them, 100 knights are worth a 1,000 men on foot," he thundered. He impugned Godfrey's courage, and wondered aloud if he were tempted to flee. "We are mounted and they are on foot," Robert reminded him tartly. The assault would go forward that very morning.

### The Battle of the Golden Spurs

A little before noon, the fighting opened with a skirmish between the crossbowmen that stood to the fore of each army. The Flemings traded crossbow bolts with the enemy and stood their ground as well as they could, but soon ran out of bolts and were forced to retreat.

Knights trailed the French crossbowmen closely, and the Flemish could ill-afford to be caught in the open where they would be easily run down. They hurried back over the marshy ground towards their lines and traversed the brooks to safety. The French kept up the rain of bolts, which now clattered onto the waiting lines of Flemish infantry. The Flemings were relatively well-armoured, and the bolts, fired from a distance, made little impression.

The French crossbowmen and light infantry were eager to cross the brooks to get closer, but Robert recalled them lest they get in the way of his knights, who were now ready to make their charge. "Foot soldiers, withdraw!" Robert

ordered, and the banners were brought to the front of the knightly formations. "Forwards!" he then cried.

Several hundred knights of the French left wing thundered ahead, their horses' hooves throwing up mud as they rode over the waterlogged soil. Some of the infantry had either failed to heed Robert's order to withdraw, or had not heard it, and they scrambled to get out of the way of the hard-charging horsemen. The knights plunged onward, crossing the Great Brook as quickly as they could. Though the stream was a mere three metres in width, this proved to be a difficult obstacle for knights on armoured war horses to traverse. A few animals refused to go forward; others fell and hurled their riders out of their saddles. At last, the French crossed and reassembled their battle formation, but the impetus of their charge had been severely reduced. Ahead of them, with their pikes and goedendags at the ready, stood the serried ranks of the men of Bruges and Franc of Bruges.

The mere sight of the charging knights was terrifying to the Flemish, with hundreds of armour-clad men bearing lances couched beneath their arms galloping toward them while trumpets blared. The Flemings did not panic, however, and embedded their pikes in the ground, waiting for the arrival of the French, while weavers and fullers with calloused hands gripped their goedendags in tight, white-knuckled grips.

Finally, the French knights reached the Flemish lines. Horses will not willingly charge

at a stationary object and so they pulled up short in front of the Flemings. A few of the most skilled knights managed to force their steeds into the ranks of infantry, but most refused, fearing to see their horses slain by the rising and falling goedendags, which even now were smashing horse skulls and stabbing them with their cruel spikes.

The rightmost squadrons of the French left wing, charging across ground that was more favourable to manoeuvre, had some real success. The knights punched their way into the lines of the men of Franc of Bruges, and a furious melee swirled in the centre of the Flemish defences. The Flemish line here teetered, threatening to cave in at any moment. But to their right, the militiamen of Bruges stood firm and threw back all attempts by the knights to run them down. Godfrey of Brabant, who had earlier in the day counselled caution, was slain when his horse, rearing before the pikes of the enemy, hurled him to the muddy earth. William of Jülich, goedendag in hand, battled toe-to-toe with the French horsemen. He was struck in the chest by an arrow that pierced his armour, but he continued to battle until he was overcome with exhaustion. He fell to the ground, and was carried from the field. A quick-thinking attendant, not wishing to allow panic to arise among the Flemings, donned his prince's coat of arms and called out "Jülich is still here!"

Robert of Artois next sent in his right wing, which had not yet been committed to battle, but this second charge foundered just like the first. The goedendag again proved its worth.



This romanticised 19th century painting shows the brutal and merciless nature of the battle as Flemish troops seek to avenge atrocities committed by the French

These simple and deadly maces were swung vigorously by hundreds of hands, cracking bones and impaling men and horses. Even where the French made small inroads, the Flemish fell upon them and contained them before they could develop into full breaches. Knights were struck dead as the men of Flanders exacted terrible revenge for their depredations. "The flower of knighthood," say the *Annals*, "...fell before the weavers, fullers and common folk of Flanders. The beauty and strength of that [French] army was turned into a dung-pit, and the glory of the French made dung and worms."

While the charges on both wings were taking place, the French garrison inside Courtrai castle attempted a breakout. The men of Ypres, though assailed by missiles from the castle walls, threw back the assault of the besieged French knights. Meanwhile, the centre of the Flemish line, where the men of Franc of Bruges stood, still hung by a thread. The battle between Fleming foot soldier and French horsemen continued in bitter close combat. If the Flemish line broke, all would be lost. John of Renesse knew that this was his moment. He sent in his Zeelander reserves

to bolster the tired men of Franc of Bruges, and these reinforcements, fresh and eager to fight, restored the line. The Flemish centre then began an advance, taking a fearsome toll on the outnumbered and recoiling knights. So aggressive were the Flemings in pursuit that they would not allow the French to disengage.

Robert of Artois, seeing that the battle was almost lost, led a final, desperate charge with the knights under his direct command. These horsemen rode over the Groeninge Brook and smacked straight into Guy of Namur's men. The charge was so powerful that the French drove deeply into Guy's lines, but then could go no further. The Flemings swarmed the knights and clubbed them with their goedendags. The Count managed to reach Guy's own banner, and ripped it in his hands, only to be overwhelmed by the Flemings and killed. By around 3pm, the fighting was over and the surviving French knights fled the field as best they could.

#### Aftermath

With the battle lost, the embattled French garrison in Courtrai castle soon surrendered.

The toll taken on the knighthood of France was ghastly. "Kill all that has spurs on," Guy had earlier decreed, and the obedient militiamen had shown no mercy. The cost incurred by their poor horses was dreadful as well. "Above all, slay the horses," the Flemings had also been ordered before the start of the battle.

The *Annals* reported that some 3,000 "splendid chargers and valuable horses," fell to the pikes and goedendags of the Flemish.

The French had charged against determined soldiers holding a strong defensive position. The result was a massacre, with the French losing at least 1,000 knights, many of them leading noblemen. The Flemings, who had themselves lost a few hundred of their own, took some 500 pairs of golden spurs from the corpses of French knights and displayed them in the Church of Our Lady in Courtrai. From these trophies, the Flemish would also give the battle its infamous name – the Battle of the Golden Spurs.

The great victory at Courtrai, in which ordinary infantry had bested armoured knights, would become a cornerstone of Flemish national identity.

**"THE FRENCH HAD CHARGED AGAINST DETERMINED SOLDIERS HOLDING A STRONG DEFENSIVE POSITION. THE RESULT WAS A MASSACRE, WITH THE FRENCH LOSING AT LEAST 1,000 KNIGHTS MANY OF THEM LEADING NOBLEMEN"**

#### FURTHER READING

- ★ THE GOLDEN SPURS OF KORTRIJK BY RANDALL FEGLEY
- ★ FRENCH MEDIEVAL ARMIES 1000-1300 BY DAVID NICOLLE
- ★ EUROPEAN MEDIEVAL TACTICS (2) BY DAVID NICOLLE
- ★ THE BATTLE OF THE GOLDEN SPURS BY JF VERBRUGGEN



**"IF THE UNITED STATES WERE TO HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE AND REAL INFLUENCE IN SHAPING THE POST-WAR WORLD, IT HAD TO INVEST WITH BLOOD AND TREASURE ON FAR-OFF BATTLEFIELDS"**



Illustration: Joe Cummings



*This graphic painting titled 'The Germans Arrive' depicts atrocities such as those perpetrated in Belgium during the offensive of 1914*

## **ROAD TO THE FRONT**

**GERMAN ATROCITIES, ESPIONAGE AND UNRESTRICTED SUBMARINE WARFARE PUSHED THE UNITED STATES TO JOIN BRITAIN AND FRANCE IN THEIR STRUGGLE**

When German troops attacked France in 1914, their breach of Belgian neutrality shocked the world, particularly as reports of atrocities in that country were published. Americans were appalled and favourable public opinion of Germany eroded appreciably.

In mid-1915, a stunning event brought the spectre of espionage and covert operations close to home for Americans. A German embassy official left his briefcase unattended on a New York City train, and its contents were made public, indicating a systematic effort to

conduct sabotage in Canada and foment unrest in the United States. Germany had assumed an aggressive posture with America.

On 7 May 1915, the Cunard passenger liner *Lusitania* was sunk by the German submarine U-20 off Ireland's Old Head of Kinsale, and 128 Americans were among the dead. The *Lusitania*'s sinking was one of numerous incidents amid Germany's policy of unrestricted submarine warfare. American public opinion galvanised against perceived German treachery.



The American flag was first seen in WWI during the Battle of Vimy Ridge, where US soldiers charged the German lines with 'Old Glory' attached to their bayonets

# 1917

# AMERICA GOES TO WAR

After years of neutrality, the United States entered World War I with a flurry of diplomatic declarations and patriotism

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

**R**ather than a rapid, bold march to the sound of the guns in Europe, the entry of the United States into World War I was a slow, deliberate, at times grudging, slog – that is until early 1917.

President Woodrow Wilson had sought throughout his administration to maintain American neutrality during the horrific conflict, even successfully campaigning for his second term with the slogan: “He kept us out of war!” and somewhat ominously in the modern political climate: “America First”

In 1914, just weeks after the outbreak of war in Europe, Wilson addressed congress saying, “The United States must be neutral in fact, as well as in name, during these days that are to try men’s souls. We must be impartial in thought, as well as action.”

As a neutral nation, the tenuous American premise was simply that its financial institutions could loan money to any of the warring countries. American businesses could sell raw materials, food, finished goods and munitions to them as well. American merchant ships should be allowed to ply the waters of the troubled Atlantic Ocean without the fear of being intercepted or being torpedoed by German submarines.

### Ties and tensions

Along with the practical considerations for his country, Wilson was obliged to acknowledge several significant points. The United States was a nation of immigrants. Citizens of British, German, Irish, Eastern European and other lineage maintained emotional and familial ties to their ‘old countries’, and perhaps even divided loyalties.

“The people of the United States are drawn from many nations and chiefly from the nations now at war,” the president told Congress in August 1914. “It is natural and inevitable that some will wish for one nation, others another, to succeed in the momentous struggle. Such divisions among us would be fatal to our peace of mind and might seriously stand in the way of our duty as the one great nation at peace, the

one nation ready to play a part of mediator and counsellor of peace.”

Strong Isolationist sentiment augmented by a pacifistic element in government engendered vehement opposition to US involvement in World War I under any circumstances. Even Wilson’s own Democratic Party was divided. A committed pacifist, secretary of state William Jennings Bryan, resigned his post in frustration in June 1915. Bryan believed that the president, hesitant though he was to commit his country to war, had turned a deaf ear to pacifist pleadings.

Socialist politicians expressed passionate opposition to American involvement in the war, with such inflammatory observations that on either end of the gun, ally or enemy, was an exploited worker. In the presidential election of 1912, socialist candidate Eugene V Debs had actually garnered six per cent of the popular vote.

Mothers moaned that they had not raised their sons to be soldiers. Meanwhile, titans of American finance and industry did in fact reap substantial profits from high interest loans and shipments of steel, machinery, nuts, bolts and bullets to the warring countries.

While the Preparedness Movement advocated a build up of the US armed forces in anticipation of an America at war, interventionists argued that joining the conflict on the side of Great Britain and France, resulting in victory, would preserve trade and contribute to eventual stability around the world.

### A distant dream?

Increasingly, Wilson was compelled to recognise the fact that the possibility of mediating a lasting peace was little more than an illusion. From a pragmatic standpoint, if the United States were to have a seat at the table and real influence in shaping the post-war world, it had to invest with blood and treasure on far-off battlefields.

Even more readily apparent was the simple fact that the American notion of neutrality was more an exercise in diplomatic wishful thinking. Both Britain and Germany required imports of raw materials and other commodities to sustain their war machines and feed their people.



Logically, each sought to deny the trans-Atlantic logistics lifeline to the other.

At the time, the British Royal Navy was the largest and strongest in the world. Almost from the outset, its strict blockade was pinching the German wartime economy. At the risk of damaging relations with the US, British warships stopped, searched and turned around American merchantmen bound for German ports. Protests from the Wilson administration backed the British down somewhat, but it was difficult to argue with the soundness of their strategy to strangle the enemy.

The German Navy lacked the resources in surface warships to impose a crippling blockade against the British Isles. However, a viable alternative did exist. Submarines, or U-boats, were relatively cheap to produce, and German shipyards could turn them out in meaningful numbers. A cordon of German submarines might well sink enough shipping, neutral or otherwise, to deprive Great Britain of the staples of war and work. Without cotton, for example, British mills would shut down. Without food, British tables would be empty.

### The Sussex Pledge

In the autumn of 1914, Britain declared the entire North Sea a war zone. In retaliation, on 4 February, 1915, the German Navy warned that

enemy merchant vessels encountered in the waters around the British Isles would be sunk without warning and that it could not guarantee the safety of neutral shipping. Previously, maritime prize rules specified that submarines were to surface and merchant ships stopped on the open sea were to accede to being searched prior to sinking. Their crews were to be removed to safety. Only in cases of armed resistance or a persistent refusal to stop were submarines allowed to diverge from these rules.

On 28 March 1915, the German submarine U-28 torpedoed the British steamship Falaba, killing more than 100 people, including one American, mining engineer Leon Thrasher of Massachusetts. Protests were lodged with both the British and German governments. On 7 May, the Cunard passenger liner Lusitania was torpedoed by the submarine U-20 off the coast of Ireland, killing 128 Americans. On 19 August, the liner Arabic was sunk by U-24, where three Americans perished.

Although the circumstances of each incident, including German compliance with or disregard of the rules of engagement, is debated to this day, the US issued at least three stern warnings to Germany. Then, on 24 March 1916, the unarmed English Channel ferry Sussex was torpedoed and heavily damaged. Although no Americans were killed, President Wilson warned

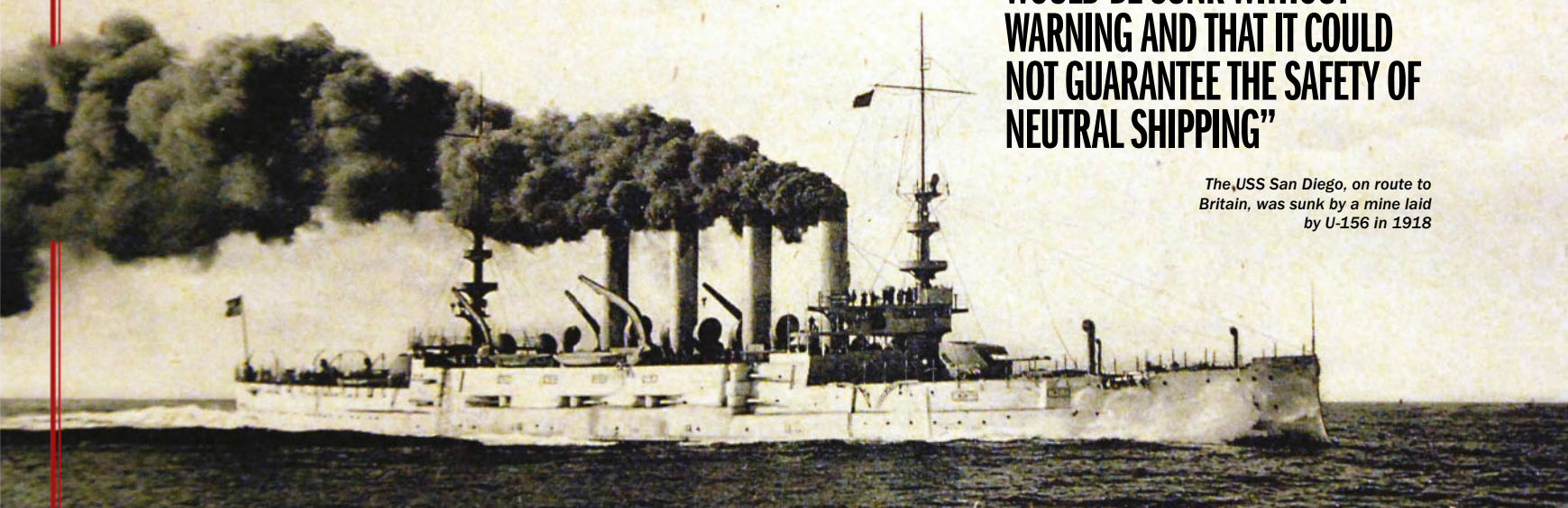
that the USA would break diplomatic relations with Germany if such attacks continued.

The result was the Sussex Pledge, which the Germans issued on 4 May 1916, stating that U-boats would refrain from targeting passenger ships, merchant ships would not be sunk unless they were determined to be carrying contraband, specifically munitions, and that U-boat captains would see to the safety of all aboard prior to sinking merchant ships.

The Sussex Pledge proved only a temporary solution to the opposing exigencies of war and the US demand for free navigation of the seas and other guarantees. The sinkings of the Lusitania and Arabic had roused American public opinion against Germany, and further provocative actions would certainly lead to a US declaration of war. Nevertheless, the

**“ON 4 FEBRUARY, 1915, THE GERMAN NAVY WARNED THAT ENEMY MERCHANT VESSELS ENCOUNTERED IN THE WATERS AROUND THE BRITISH ISLES WOULD BE SUNK WITHOUT WARNING AND THAT IT COULD NOT GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF NEUTRAL SHIPPING”**

*The USS San Diego, on route to Britain, was sunk by a mine laid by U-156 in 1918*



## THE FIRST TO FIGHT

AMERICANS FOUGHT FOR THE IDEALS OF FREEDOM BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR COUNTRY ENTERED WORLD WAR I

### EDWARD MANDELL STONE



**ENLISTED: 2 AUGUST 1914**  
A 1908 Harvard graduate, Stone enlisted in the

French Foreign Legion. By October, he was with a machine gun section in northern France. Wounded by shrapnel on 17 February 1915, he died 12 days later. Stone is considered the first American to die as a result of combat during World War I.

### CHARLES SWEENEY



**ENLISTED: 1914**  
A major in the US Army at the war's outbreak, and graduate

of the US Military Academy, Sweeney joined up with the French Foreign Legion and was seriously wounded. He received the Croix de Guerre and Legion of Honor for heroism in combat. He returned to the US Army in May 1917.

### FRANKLIN JUDE GARY



**ENLISTED: 1915**  
Major Frank Jude Gary of Sioux City, Iowa, enlisted at Victoria, British

Columbia, and served with the 67th Pioneer Battalion and 102nd Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He received the Military Cross and Bar from King George V in London, was wounded at Ligny-Saint-Flochel and died 12 September 1918.

### EDMOND GENET



**ENLISTED: 1915**  
Descendant of a French diplomat of the colonial period, Genet

enlisted in the French Foreign Legion while still serving in the US Navy. He later flew fighter planes with the LaFayette Escadrille and on 17 April 1917, became the first American pilot killed in action after the US declared war on Germany.

### RAOUL LUFBERY




**ENLISTED: 1914**  
Son of an American father and French mother, Lufbery enlisted in the

French Foreign Legion, transferred to the French Air Force, and in 1916 joined the LaFayette Escadrille, a squadron of American pilots in French service. Lufbery recorded 17 aerial victories and died plummeting from his aircraft on 19 May 1918.





OCEAN STEAMSHIPS  
**CUNARD**



**EUROPE VIA LIVERPOOL  
LUSITANIA**

Fastest and Largest Steamer  
now in Atlantic Service Sails  
SATURDAY, MAY 1, 10 A.M.

Transylvania, Fri., May 7, 5 P.M.  
Orduna, - - Tues. May 18, 10 A.M.  
Tuscana, - - Fri., May 21, 5 P.M.  
LUSITANIA, Sat., May 29, 10 A.M.  
Transylvania, Fri., June 4, 5 P.M.

Gibraltar-Genoa-Naples-Piraeus  
S.S. Carpathia, Thur., May 13, Noon

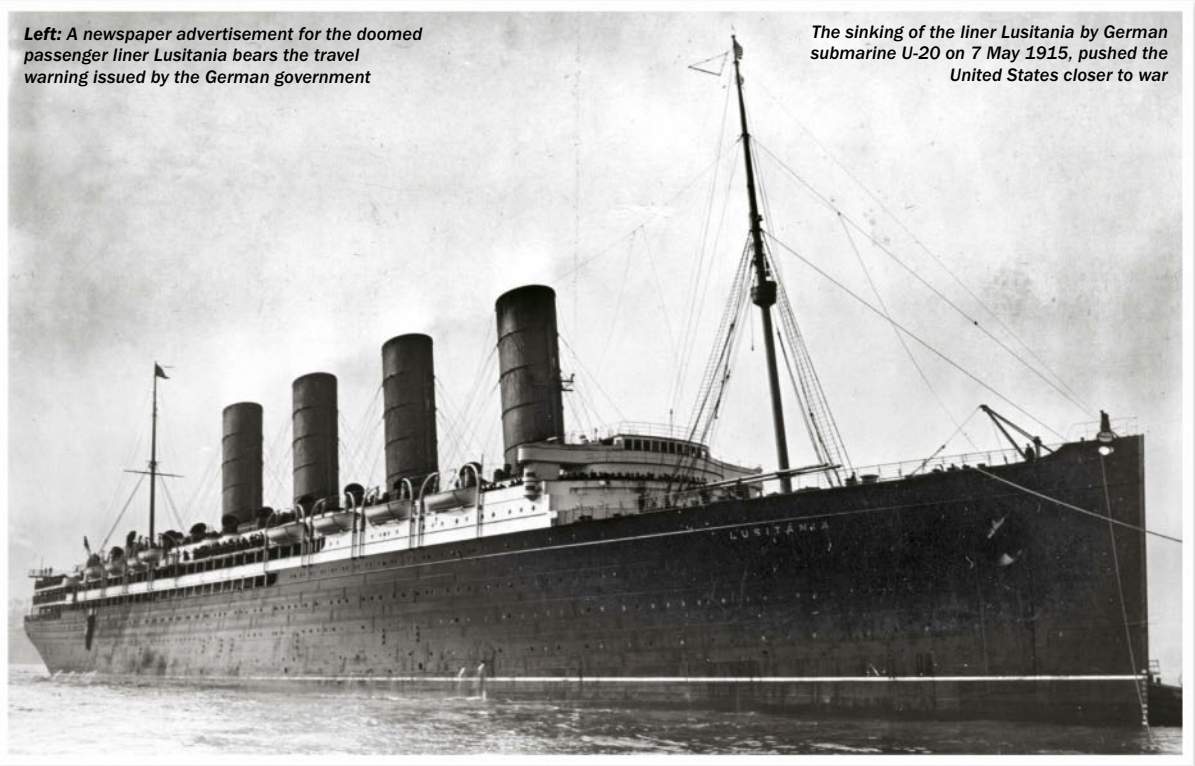
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**NOTICE!**

TRAVELLERS intending to embark on the Atlantic voyage are reminded that a state of war exists between Germany and her allies and Great Britain and her allies; that the zone of war includes the waters adjacent to the British Isles; that, in accordance with formal notice given by the Imperial German Government, vessels flying the flag of Great Britain, or of any of her allies, are liable to destruction in those waters and that travellers sailing in the war zone on ships of Great Britain or her allies do so at their own risk.

IMPERIAL GERMAN EMBASSY  
WASHINGTON, D. C., APRIL 22, 1915.

Left: A newspaper advertisement for the doomed passenger liner Lusitania bears the travel warning issued by the German government



The sinking of the liner Lusitania by German submarine U-20 on 7 May 1915, pushed the United States closer to war

German government reasoned that the United States had already compromised its neutrality by continuing to trade with Britain.

One critical fact loomed large in the pro-British shift that was gaining momentum: the Germans were killing Americans on the high seas, the British were not.

**Days of reckoning**

On 9 January 1917, Kaiser Wilhelm II convened a war council at Pless Castle in Silesia. Paramount among the topics discussed was a proposal from the highest echelon of the German Navy. In December 1916, Admiral Henning von Holtendorff had submitted a memorandum in favour of the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. Holtendorff stated his case forcefully, citing American neutrality as a sham. Unfettered, German U-boats, a total of 79 oceangoing and coastal types, could sink enough shipping to bring Britain to its knees within five months.

The admiral concluded, "Upon the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare, the United States government will once more be compelled to make a decision whether or not to take the consequences of its previous position vis-à-vis the unrestricted submarine warfare. I am absolutely of the opinion that war with the United States is such a serious matter that everything has to be undertaken to avoid it. Fear of a diplomatic rupture, however, should not lead us to recoil from the use of a weapon that promises victory for us."

On land, the German Army was experiencing some supply shortages. Representatives of

General Paul von Hindenburg, the chief of the General Staff, expressed his support for the renewed initiative. The German people were also growing restive as the privations of war weighed heavily on them. Holtendorff argued that the war "...required a decision before the autumn of 1917." Time was of the essence.

The primary dissenter among those gathered was Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg. Despite the confidence of the German military, Bethmann-Hollweg argued that American entry into the war was a certainty with the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare and that it would surely lead to the defeat of Germany. He later declared in his memoirs: "No nation will stand for not winning a war when it is convinced it can win."

The chancellor dutifully delivered the news to the Reichstag, and the German ambassador in Washington, DC, informed Wilson on 31 January 1917 that unrestricted submarine warfare would resume the following day. The president was taken aback, and any presumption that Germany still sought a mediated peace was swept away. An American newspaper later proclaimed, "The only difference between war and peace now is that we are not fighting back when the Germans are attacking us."

On 3 February, a U-boat torpedoed and sank the American merchant ship Housatonic. Wilson immediately severed diplomatic relations with Germany. On the 25 February, the Cunard liner Laconia was sunk by U-50 off the south-western tip of Ireland – an American woman and her young daughter were killed. The



Above: General John 'Blackjack' Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force, arrives in France in the spring of 1917

Below: Paying his respects, General John J. Pershing salutes the grave of the Marquis de Lafayette



**“UNFETTERED, GERMAN U-BOATS, A TOTAL OF 79 OCEANGOING AND COASTAL TYPES, COULD SINK ENOUGH SHIPPING TO BRING BRITAIN TO ITS KNEES WITHIN FIVE MONTHS”**



next day, Wilson went to congress to request the authority to arm American merchant ships against attack, itself an act of war according to international law. Although the consensus among historians is that the measure would probably have passed had it reached a vote, a group of anti-war senators succeeded in filibustering the measure. In response, President Wilson issued an executive order to arm the merchantmen.

The German onslaught continued and by the end of March 1916, five more American-flagged merchant vessels had been lost after they were attacked by U-boats. Wilson was rapidly approaching a political crossroads.

### The Zimmerman telegram

Compounding Wilson's woes was the shocking disclosure of a diplomatic communication called the Zimmermann Telegram. On 16 January 1917, British Royal Navy cryptanalysts in the top-secret Room 40 cryptographic office decoded a communication from German Foreign Minister Arthur Zimmermann to Heinrich von Eckardt, the German ambassador to Mexico. Its content was not only inflammatory, but also a potential casus belli for the United States.

Coinciding with the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, the communication gave von Eckardt specific instructions in the event that the United States entered World War I on the side of Britain and France. "We make Mexico a proposal of alliance on the following basis: make war together; make peace together, generous financial support and an understanding on our part that Mexico is to reconquer the lost territory in Texas, New Mexico and Arizona.

## "PRESIDENT WILSON WAS RELUCTANT TO ASK CONGRESS FOR A DECLARATION OF WAR"

The startling telegram went on to urge von Eckardt to discuss with Mexican Head of State, Venustiano Carranza, the possibility of persuading Japan to switch sides as well. Carranza considered the offer and asked senior army officers to evaluate the possibility of a successful military campaign to reclaim the territory that had been lost to the US in the war of 1846-1848. As German assistance was far from certain due to the British blockade, the Mexican government also recognised that defeat would be devastating and declined to enter into an alliance.

Initially, the British government refrained from presenting the Zimmermann Telegram to the Wilson administration, fearing it would disclose to the Germans that their diplomatic code had been broken. However, Admiral William Reginald Hall, head of Room 40, presented Edward Bell, the secretary of the US embassy in London, with the text of the telegram. At first, Bell refused to believe it was authentic, but once convinced he handed it to Walter Hines Page, the US ambassador to Great Britain.

After British foreign minister Arthur Balfour presented Page with the actual intercept, along with its translation in German and English, President Wilson was notified on 24 February. Two days later, the same day he had gone to congress to request authority to arm American merchant ships, Wilson made the content of

the Zimmermann Telegram public. The banner headline of the 1 March edition of the *New York Times* blared, "Germany Seeks An Alliance Against Us." Although support for a declaration of war against Germany was far from universal, public opinion that was both anti-German and anti-Mexican reached an alarming crescendo.

### March toward mobilisation

Despite the revelation of the Zimmermann Telegram and the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare, President Wilson was reluctant to ask congress for a declaration of war. He did not call a cabinet meeting to discuss the prospect until 20 March. Although he had worked so hard to keep the United States neutral after the tragic events of 1915, he had little choice two years later.

On 2 April 1917, the president addressed congress, formally requesting a declaration of war against Germany. "Property can be paid for; the lives of peaceful and innocent people cannot be. The present German submarine warfare against commerce is warfare against mankind." He stated, "I advise that congress declare the recent actions of the Imperial German Government to be, in fact, nothing less than war against the government and people of the United States. Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable where the peace of the world is involved."

Wilson went on to intone his now famous comment, "The world must be made safe for democracy. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek not material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. It is a

## AMERICA FIRST



President Woodrow Wilson ran for office under the ominous pledge 'America First' as part of his isolationist policy

## IN FOREIGN SERVICE

BEFORE THE UNITED STATES DECLARED WAR, THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS HAD ALREADY ENLISTED IN THE ARMED FORCES OF ALLIED NATIONS

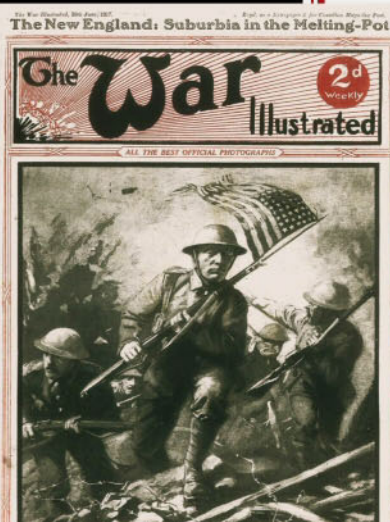
Although many of them were technically violating the law of the land, up to 50,000 Americans joined the Canadian Army prior to their own country's entry into World War I. Others wore British or French uniforms in the trenches or flying combat aircraft.

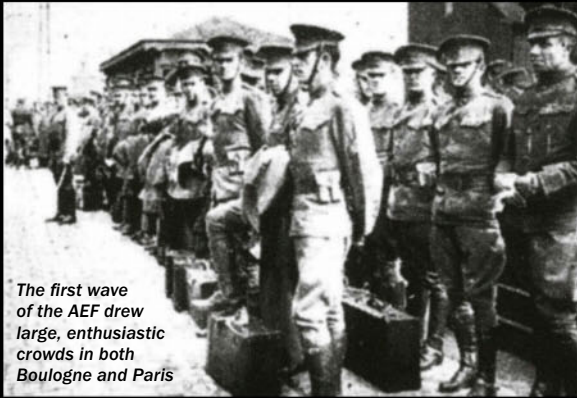
Among the best known expatriate Americans were those of Canada's American Legion, the 97th, 211th, 212th, 213th and 237th Battalions of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Recruited from across Canada in 1915-1916, these battalions participated in heavy combat on the Western Front.

One such engagement occurred at Vimy Ridge on 9-12 April 1917, just after the US declared war on Germany. An eyewitness recalled dozens of Americans in Canadian uniform producing small US flags, tying them to their bayonets and executing a spontaneous charge against a German trench, killing and capturing numerous enemy soldiers, and raising a cheer.

*The War Illustrated*, a contemporary magazine, depicted a romanticised image of the event on its cover and recounted the story of a young soldier from Texas who, "carried his flag to the very front, but in the assault he fell with a bullet in his body. He was taken to hospital, but his fate has not come to light."

Right: Published on 30 June 1917, The War Illustrated cover showed American soldiers charging on Vimy Ridge





The first wave of the AEF drew large, enthusiastic crowds in both Boulogne and Paris



Pershing and his staff arrive in France on the transport ship *Invicta*. A large crowd turned out to welcome the first wave of the AEF



Nearing Boulogne, General Pershing and his staff salute as the national anthem is played



Above: General Pershing, having just arrived in France, pauses to talk to a British general before making his way to Paris

## PERSHING AND THE AEF IN FRANCE

ORGANISATION, TRAINING AND EVENTUALLY A BAPTISM OF FIRE MARKED THE SLOW BUT INEXORABLE DEPLOYMENT OF THE AMERICAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN FRANCE

Secretary of war Newton D Baker, with the approval of President Woodrow Wilson, appointed General John 'Blackjack' Pershing to lead the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) to war in Europe, although Pershing was junior in rank to five other major generals of the US Army.

Pershing's task was daunting. The army was small, under-equipped and lacked training. Draftees had to be shaped into soldiers, and for this reason Pershing resisted the early deployment of large numbers of American troops in Europe.

In a symbolic gesture, 14,000 American soldiers had reached France by June 1917. The draft would soon swell the ranks of the US Army and by the

spring of 1918, General Pershing led more than 1 million Americans in uniform abroad. When Pershing left for Europe, Secretary Baker offered, "I will give you only two orders, one to go to France and the other to come home. In the meantime, your authority in France will be supreme."

General Pershing exercised that authority to assert American independence of command, refusing to allow his troops to be parcelled out among British and French units as replacements. He did initially allow American units to operate under senior Allied command to gain combat experience, particularly in early engagements at Cantigny, Belleau Wood and Hamel.

Organisation and training were ongoing, with 32 camps established in the United States, and such preparations continued in France. The blueprint for the AEF in Europe dictated a field army of 1 million men in five corps, totalling 30 divisions. Pershing later revised his perceived requirement for manpower to 3 million men and 80 divisions. However, the immediate concern – getting the US Army into the fight – took early precedence.

Placing American industry on a war footing was an arduous process, particularly since President Wilson had hesitated to do so prior to 1917 for fear of provoking Germany. When the AEF arrived,

precious little equipment beyond the basic gear of the infantryman was available from American factories. Instead, British and French weapons were issued to the Americans in large numbers.

At the height of US involvement in World War I, 3,500 artillery pieces were in service with the AEF. Only 667 of these were made in America. The rest were primarily the French 75mm Model 1897 and Schneider 155mm cannon. Of the 2,698 planes in the army's aviation section, only 477 were American-made, while a paltry 130 of these were utilised in combat. Although it was an American design, the British-manufactured Lewis Gun, an excellent machine gun, was issued to US troops along with less impressive French Chauchat. American armoured units were populated with British and French vehicles, particularly the French Renault FT-17 tank.

Throughout the American deployment on the Western Front and the AEF combat experience, French Marshal Ferdinand Foch served as commander-in-chief of the Allied armies. Pershing co-operated but maintained separate, practical US command structure as much as possible. He reasoned that the US Army might one day bear the brunt of manpower needed to continue the fight against Germany.

**"I WILL GIVE YOU ONLY TWO ORDERS, ONE TO GO TO FRANCE AND THE OTHER TO COME HOME. IN THE MEANTIME, YOUR AUTHORITY IN FRANCE WILL BE SUPREME"**



fearful thing to lead this great, peaceful people into war." On 4 April, the senate voted 82-6 in favour of Wilson's request. The House of Representatives followed suit on 6 April, voting 373-50 to go to war.

Ironically, although the United States was at war with Germany in the spring of 1917, the country was hardly able to make an immediate contribution of troops on the Western Front in Europe. In fact, German awareness of the pathetic state of the American military had probably encouraged the resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare. The US Navy did contribute a battle group to station at the Royal Navy anchorage of Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands and destroyers to anti-submarine patrols and convoy duty in the Atlantic; however, the initial deployments of US Marines and Army troops to Europe was much more a trickle than a torrent.

By the time the US entered the Great War, its standing army numbered only about 200,000 troops, including a poorly trained, pitifully equipped and highly politicised National Guard that comprised nearly half its complement. Dwarfed by the size of the British, French and German armies, the US Army was also inexperienced. Only time, training and the sting of combat could change such conditions. In May 1917, congress passed the Selective Service Act. All males aged 21 to 30 were required to register, and within a year, more than 1 million American soldiers were in France.

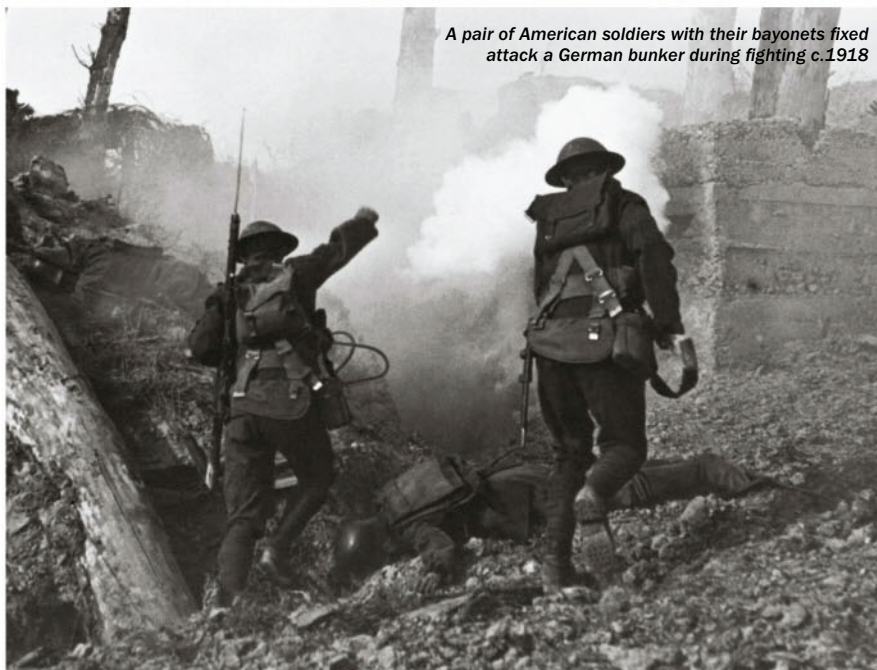
### "Lafayette, we are here!"

The American Expeditionary Force, under the command of General John 'Blackjack' Pershing, began arriving in France in June 1917, and one of the general's aides, Colonel Charles E Stanton, remarked, "LaFayette, we are here" while visiting the tomb of the French nobleman who had supported the fledgling colonies during the American Revolution nearly 150 years earlier.

British and French commanders proposed to use American troops as replacements for their own losses, essentially breaking up their unit cohesion and feeding them into the trenches of the Western Front alongside veterans of the horror. Pershing flatly refused and maintained command of the American forces in Europe for the duration of the war.

Pershing was compelled to accept the offer of the British and French in one significant aspect of the American deployment. Although US riflemen, known as Doughboys, carried the Springfield Model 1903 rifle in substantial numbers, other weapons and war materiel were scarce in the United States. Placing American industry on a war footing was a lengthy process, and the transportation of goods across the Atlantic was even more time consuming. Therefore, American troops commonly fought using weapons of British and French manufacture, including the use of tanks and aircraft.

Mass mobilisation was not limited to the military though, and on the home front the entire American nation was also immersed in the war effort. Government agencies were established to assist and administer the transition of the US economy



A pair of American soldiers with their bayonets fixed attack a German bunker during fighting c.1918



from peacetime to war, while factories began to turn out the uniforms, weapons and other equipment that were needed to outfit the burgeoning armed forces. Farmers were asked to redouble their productivity and the United States Food Administration encouraged average citizens to plant victory gardens in backyards and empty plots.

### Contact at Cantigny

The elaborate system of opposing trenches along the Western Front stretched from the English Channel to the Swiss frontier. Since 1914, the opposing forces had been mired in the stalemate, neither side capable of gaining the upper hand and sustaining a decisive offensive action. With the positions of existing British and French troops already fixed, the first organised American units were deployed on the Allied southern flank.

In October 1917, the US 1st Division made its first tentative foray into the trenches as one battalion at a time spent 10 days in the line

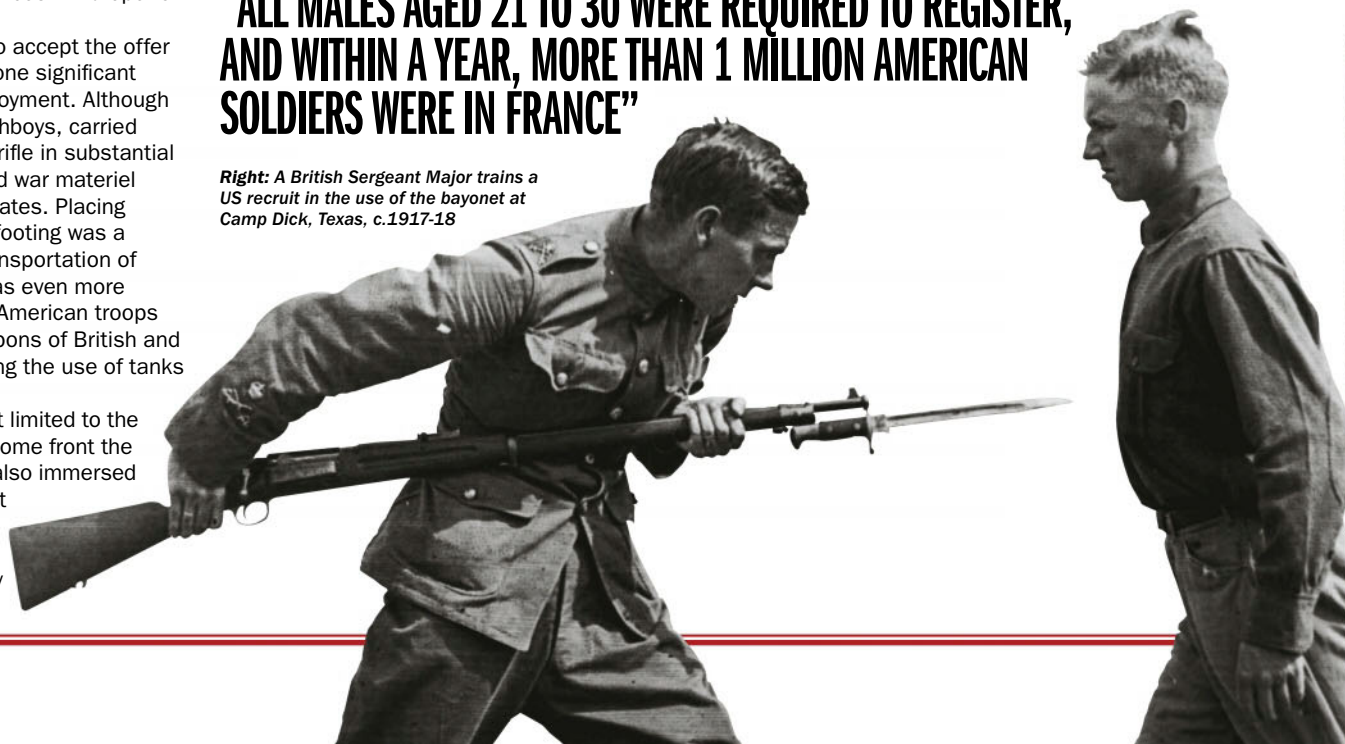
alongside soldiers of a veteran French division. During fighting on 2-3 November 1917, the Germans raided a trench occupied by American troops who, only days before, had paraded proudly through the streets of Paris. The first combat casualties under the US flag were sustained: three dead and 11 captured.

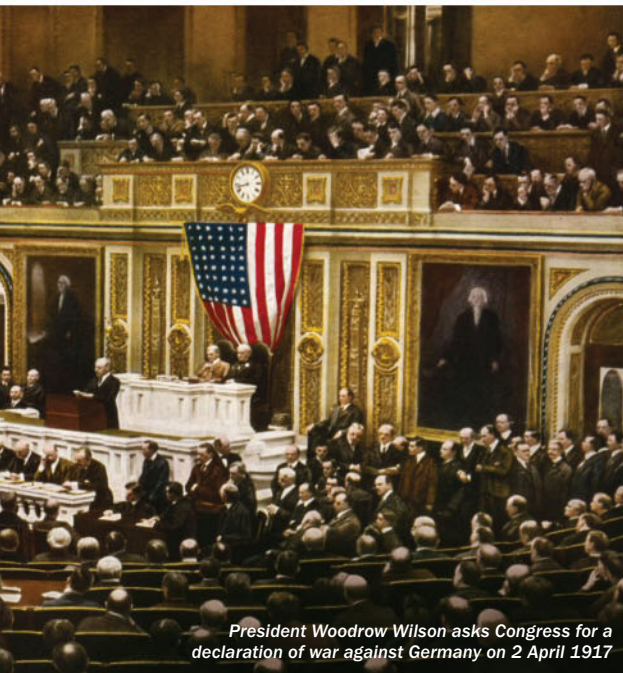
In the spring of 1918, the German high command realised that the weight of American numbers would eventually tip the balance irretrievably in favour of Allied victory. In a desperate gamble to stave off defeat, the Germans launched their last major offensive of the war. South east of their deepest penetration of Allied lines, the Germans had maintained a small salient around the town of Saint Mihiel since 1914. American troops of the 26th Division were entrenched in the area.

On April 20, a regiment of German infantry followed a heavy bombardment with an attack against the American trenches near the village of Seicheprey, overrunning two companies of the 26th Division and capturing the trenchline.

## "ALL MALES AGED 21 TO 30 WERE REQUIRED TO REGISTER, AND WITHIN A YEAR, MORE THAN 1 MILLION AMERICAN SOLDIERS WERE IN FRANCE"

Right: A British Sergeant Major trains a US recruit in the use of the bayonet at Camp Dick, Texas, c.1917-18





*President Woodrow Wilson asks Congress for a declaration of war against Germany on 2 April 1917*



*American soldiers of the 23rd Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division fire their infantry support gun at German positions in France*

## “FRENCH TROOPS HAD TAKEN THE TOWN TWICE, ONLY TO BE THROWN BACK. NOW IT WAS THE AMERICANS’ TURN”

American efforts to counterattack were a shambles, and when they eventually moved forward, the Germans had already withdrawn. General Pershing was livid, the poor showing had cost the Americans more than 750 men killed, wounded and captured. The Germans suffered 160 dead.

Some measure of redemption was achieved a few weeks later as the 1st Division, commanded by aggressive Major General Robert L Bullard, moved northward along the line to bolster French positions under German attack. Once his division had reached its assigned sector near Montdidier, Bullard clamoured for the opportunity to seize the initiative. Held by elements of the German 18th Army, the village of Cantigny was situated on commanding high ground near the tip of the

Saint Mihiel salient. French troops had taken the town twice, only to be thrown back. Now it was the Americans’ turn.

On the morning of May 28, the 1st Division’s 28th Regiment, which was commanded by Colonel Hanson Ely, advanced along with three machine-gun companies and a company of engineers behind a rolling artillery barrage. Supported by French tanks and aircraft, the co-ordinated assault pushed the Germans out of the village in little more than 90 minutes. However, the toughest test for the Americans was in holding Cantigny against repeated German counterattacks.

The first enemy riposte came just minutes after the town fell into American hands and was stopped cold. The 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry Regiment, under Major Theodore Roosevelt, Jr,

son of the former president, arrived to reinforce the American positions. Over the course of the next 48 hours, five more enemy counterattacks were repulsed. As the struggle to hold Cantigny continued, the French artillery was withdrawn to meet another threat. Only American field guns remained to blunt the German attacks, but their timely and accurate fire helped to shred the enemy ranks.

When the situation stabilised, the 18th Regiment relieved Ely’s command. The Americans lost more than 200 killed in action and 800 wounded or captured, while German casualties included 250 taken prisoner and an unknown number of dead. 20 years after the Battle of Cantigny, Americans returned to erect a monument commemorating the first attack by an American division in the world war.

These early actions involving American soldiers during World War I were limited in scope; however, the American Expeditionary Force was destined to participate in the fighting on a much grander scale.

*American soldiers throw hand grenades toward an enemy trench during action on the Western Front in 1918*





By James Montgomery Flagg (1877-1960). "I like this because of the iconic image of Uncle Sam with a simple but very clear message," says expert Adam Inglut



# I am telling you

On June 28<sup>th</sup> I expect you to enlist in the army of war savers to back up my army of fighters.

**W. S. S. Enlistment**





# PROPAGANDA ON THE HOME FRONT

ONE MAN'S EXTENSIVE COLLECTION OF AMERICAN WARTIME POSTERS IS EXPECTED TO FETCH £25,000 AT AUCTION

The Committee on Public Information engaged in a vigorous propaganda effort through rallies, parades and encouraging performers to produce patriotically themed entertainment. The image of a stern Uncle Sam appeared on recruiting posters across the country and Liberty Bond drives generated cash to finance the effort to defeat 'the Hun'. The Espionage and Sedition Act of 1917 gagged much of the domestic opposition to American involvement in WWI.

A landmark test case, *Schenck v United States*, was actually decided after the war. On 3 March 1919, the US Supreme Court ruled that activities that posed a "clear and present danger" or could result in a crime, such as dodging the draft, were punishable by law.

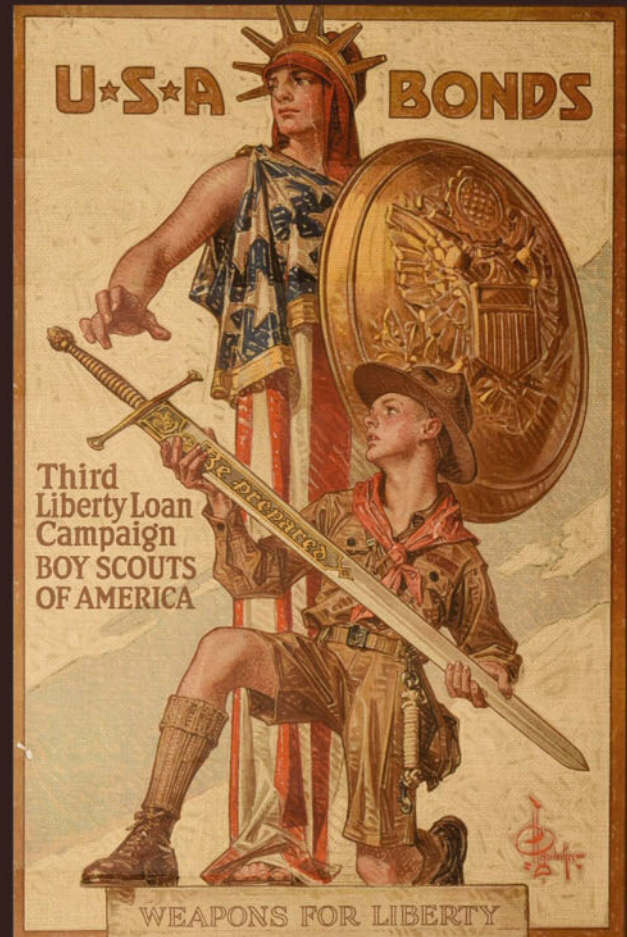
Americans enjoyed the hit song *Over There*, written by George M Cohan, sauerkraut became Liberty Cabbage and frankfurters were

termed hot dogs. The majority of the American people supported the war effort, however soon enough the surge of patriotism was tempered with the publication of the first casualty lists.

On 8 March 2017, in Newbury, UK, a single-owner collection of 77 original WWI American posters are all being sold as individual lots, ranging from £80-£100 to £800-£1,200. The collector, David Schwartz, purchased the majority of these pieces in New York City, where he was based. His impressive collection is estimated to fetch a total of £25,000.

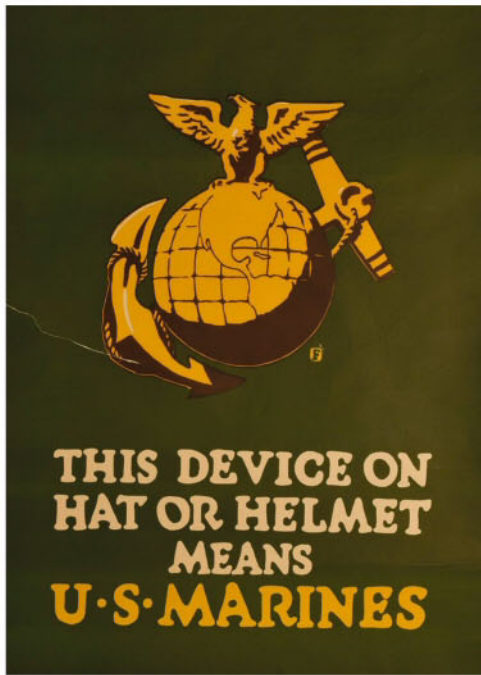
"All of these posters have fantastic artwork with very bold and vibrant colours, which is what attracted David to them and is what I love about them too," says expert Adam Inglut. "The auction is timely given that it is the 100th anniversary of the USA joining WWI."

Artist Joseph Christian Leyendecker (1874-1951), dated 1917

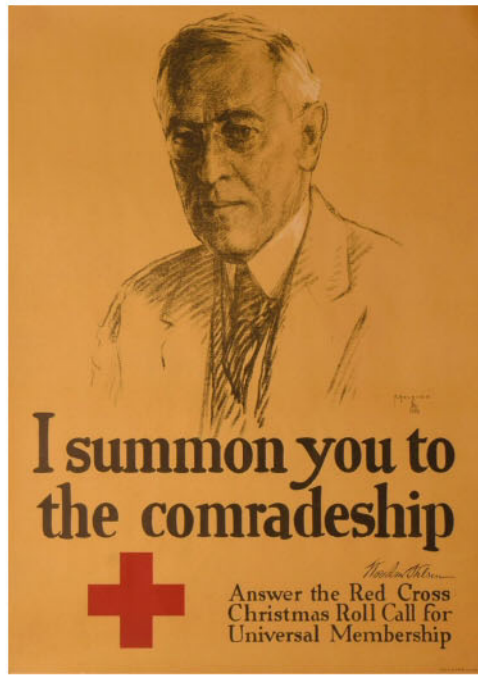


A woman symbolising America, with sword, shield and US Flag, in front of an eagle and marching soldiers, designed by John Scott Williams (1877-1976)





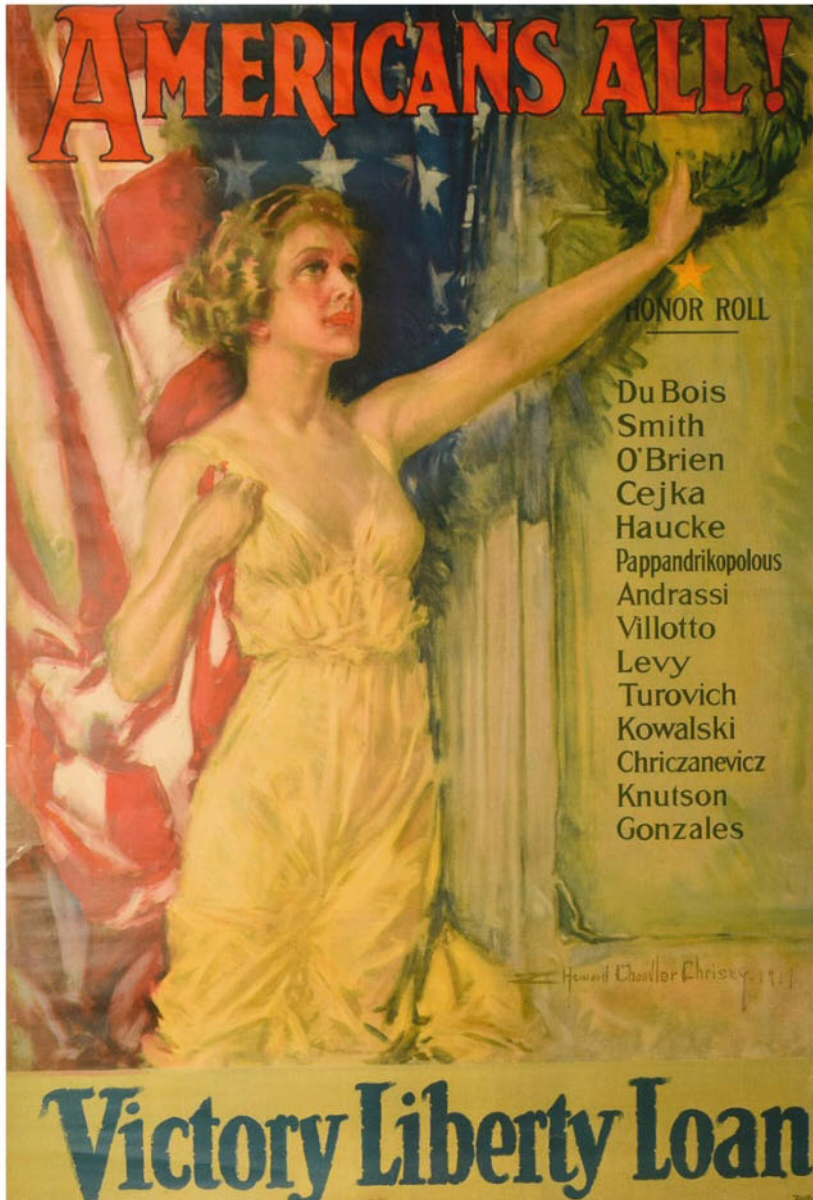
Charles Buckles Falls (1874-1960)



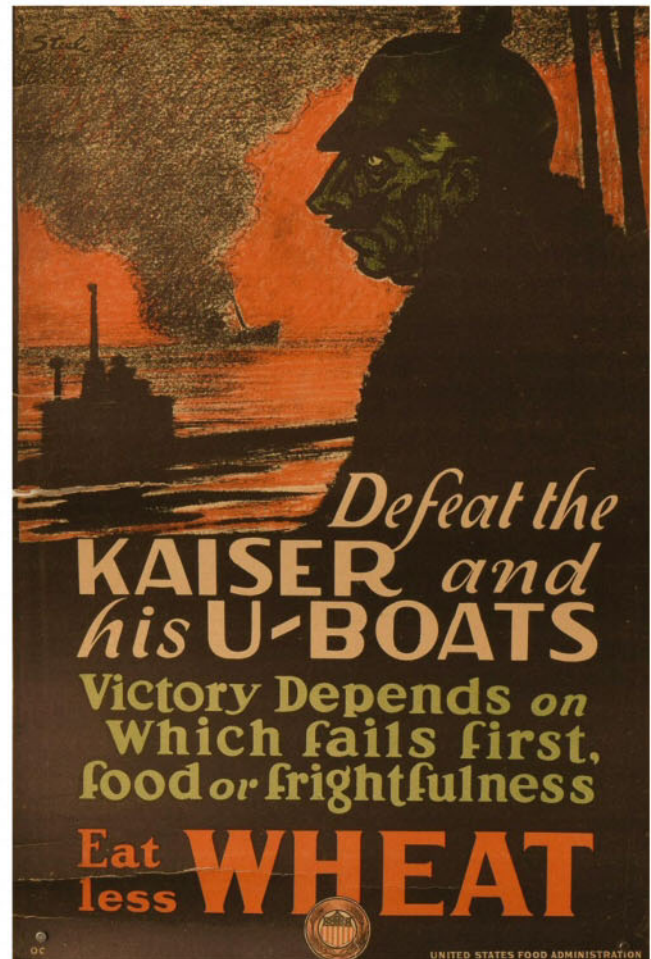
Artwork by Leo Mielzner (1869-1935), c.1917



Artwork by William Haskell Coffin (1878-1941)



c.1919, the artwork by Howard Chandler Christy (1873-1952)



Germany's U-boat campaign fuelled propaganda responses from the US, c.1917



The auction is being held at Special Auction Services in Newbury, Berkshire UK and bidding can take place in person, online or via telephone. For information, visit [www.specialauctionservices.com](http://www.specialauctionservices.com) or email [mail@specialauctionservices.com](mailto:mail@specialauctionservices.com).





# Crush the Prussian



**BUY A BOND**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Liberty Loan**

Created c.1918 by an unknown artist, this piece has the highest auction value



Francisco Pizarro as he might have appeared during the conquest of the Incan Empire in the early 1530s. His face is based on portrait dating from around 1540 and his beard would have been of some interest to the Incas, who were unused to seeing facial hair. His full suit of armour (which includes the famous "Morion" helmet) would have been vital for his protection in Peru where the conquistadors were vastly outnumbered. The sword is based on a blade that reputedly belonged to Pizarro and would have been made of tough Toledo steel. Pizarro also probably wore a red sash and cape to mark him out as an officer and commander.



Illustration: Jean-Michel Girard - The Art Agency



# SCOURGE OF THE INCA

WORDS TOM GARNER

Francisco Pizarro was among the most daring leaders of the conquistadors and his dramatic rags-to-riches story brought down an entire civilisation

**I**n 1542, a Dominican friar called Bartolomé de las Casas was reflecting on his life experiences. As one of the first Spanish settlers in the Americas, he was well aware of his participation in momentous times, “Everything that has happened since the marvellous discovery of the Americas has been so extraordinary that the whole story remains quite incredible to anyone who has not experienced it at first hand.”

Las Casas was right. The Spanish conquests in the American continents, during the 15th and 16th centuries, are historical events of almost unrivalled significance. Rather than being seen as a clash between the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ worlds, the period should be considered as the titanic struggle between two mutually alien cultures that were separated not just by thousands of kilometres, but millennia as well.

What was to unfold was an unparalleled disaster of apocalyptic scale. The extreme brutality of the Spanish, and the European diseases that accompanied them, combined to utterly destroy the last advanced civilisation that had developed independently on Earth: the Inca Empire.

The man most responsible for the destruction of the sophisticated Incas was an ambitious Spaniard called Francisco Pizarro who managed to overthrow an entire empire with a conquistador army of less than 200 men. This astonishing story is compelling for its audacity but it was also a tragedy that resulted in the deaths of countless millions in the immoral cause of greed and subjection.

## Swineherd turned soldier

Pizarro’s origins are so obscure that his date of birth is hard to verify and ranges between 1471 and 1476. Born at Trujillo in Castile, the future ruler of Peru was the illegitimate son of a local nobleman and a household maid. Pizarro started life by living with his mother as a pig herder and his illegitimacy prevented him from inheriting his father’s estate. Nevertheless, the elder Pizarro had served on military campaigns and his son, who presumably felt he had little option, followed suit and served as a soldier during the Italian Wars.

Little is known of Pizarro’s military experience in Italy but he possibly served under the Spanish

general Gonzalo Fernández de Córdoba. If this is true then Pizarro might have learned much from Córdoba who popularised the use of firearms in Europe, particularly the hand-held arquebus and specific units of artillery. These innovations laid the groundwork for Spanish continental domination and it is likely that this heavily influenced Pizarro for his own campaigns.

Pizarro returned to Spain around 1498 before sailing for the New World in 1502 as a bodyguard for the governor of Santo Domingo. De las Casas, who was also on the voyage, later described the young soldier as taciturn, “little given to drink” and most intriguingly, a reckless gambler. Over the following years, Pizarro served as a conquistador and was the deputy of Vasco Núñez de Balboa who led the expedition that discovered the Pacific Ocean.

His ruthless streak was already evident when he later arrested Balboa and was party to his execution. Pizarro was rewarded and became the mayor of the newly founded Panama City between 1519-23 but his ambitions remained unfulfilled. There were rumours of a tribe of legendary wealth to the south of Panama known as the ‘Birú’ and Pizarro wanted to be the first to take the lion’s share of the reputed treasure. The people who would become the victims of his greed were the famous Incas.

## “Son of the Sun”

By the early 16th century, the Inca Empire had expanded to include not just what today is Peru but also large parts of Ecuador, Bolivia and northern Chile. Although it was a Bronze Age civilisation with macabre practices

*Below: The Spanish inflicted countless massacres on the Incas to assert their dominance over the conquered people*



# PIZARRO'S EXPEDITIONS OF CONQUEST

ALTHOUGH FINAL VICTORY OVER THE INCA EMPIRE WAS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE AND RELATIVELY SWIFT, IT HAD TAKEN THE CONQUISTADORS THREE EXPEDITIONS OVER THE COURSE OF ALMOST A DECADE TO EVEN REACH PERU

This map charts Pizarro's expeditions between 1524-33 and their routes show the faltering starts he made towards his goal. Pizarro always departed from Panama City and his expeditions were unique for being the first European voyages to explore the western South American coastline. The first two expeditions were largely failures that were confined to island-hopping and hugging the coast. By comparison, the third expedition was an unqualified success and saw Pizarro sail and march all the way from Panama City to the Incan capital of Cuzco.



Pizarro draws a "line in the sand" during his second expedition and urges his men to follow him south to riches. The few that did became known as the "Glorious Thirteen"



such as human sacrifice and the worship of mummies, the Incas were also highly practical with an advanced road network, formidable architecture and a commercial, redistributive economy. Despite these achievements, the Incas lived in isolation and one later recalled, "Until the Spanish came, we thought this was the whole world, for we knew no other."

At the heart of this civilisation was an absolute emperor whose title was 'Sapa Inca' (the Unique Inca). Indeed, the word 'Inca' strictly applies to the ruler, not the people, and the emperor was reputed to be the descendant of the sun god. He was literally the "son of the Sun." Such was the emperor's power, that a Spanish-educated Incan reflected, "Having read accounts of the various kings and emperors of the world... none of them enjoyed such esteem or wore so lofty a crown." Ironically, despite this godlike status, it would only take an illiterate former swineherd, armed with previously unknown weapons, to topple the emperor.

## A line in the sand

It would take Pizarro three separate expeditions to achieve his unlikely dreams. By the early 1520s he had become an accomplished businessman and in late 1524 launched his first voyage with his colleague Diego de Almagro. This expedition consisted of 80 men and 40 horses but it achieved nothing and Almagro even lost an eye during a skirmish.

On the second voyage between 1526-28, the expedition was larger and consisted of 160 men and several horses. When Almagro returned to Panama for more supplies, Pizarro continued sailing down the Pacific coast and below the Equator. His first contact with the Inca was a boat laden with treasure including silver and gold. The crew indicated in sign language that the goods came from a rich

land to the south that confirmed the Spanish rumours and Pizarro pressed on. However, he made a mistake by moving his men to a swampy island, and his troops began to die from mosquito infections. After enduring months of poor conditions, Pizarro's men were reduced to around 80 men and mutiny was close when supply ships from the governor of Panama arrived.

The governor sent a message telling Pizarro to abandon the expedition, which personally disheartened him but exhilarated his exhausted men. Pizarro was not a man to easily give up and he assembled his men on the beach where he drew a line in the sand with his sword. He then delivered one of the most famous ultimatums in history. Pointing to the line Pizarro reputedly said, "Friends and comrades! On that side (south) are toil, hunger, nakedness, the drenching storm, desertion and death. On this side, ease and pleasure. There lies Peru with its riches; here, Panama and its poverty. Choose, each man, what best becomes a brave Castilian. For my part, I go to the south."

Despite the rhetoric only 13 men crossed the line to join Pizarro while the others departed back to Panama. Nevertheless, these conquistadors, known as the 'Glorious Thirteen' would form the nucleus of Pizarro's future ventures and although they languished on another island for seven months, they were eventually resupplied by Almagro and set off once again before landing in the Tumbes region of Peru in late 1528.

The Incas welcomed the Spaniards but although Pizarro considered them to be 'rational' people, he nevertheless ordered

# GUNPOWDER, STEEL & HOOVES

'Sallet' helmets were popular across Europe from the mid-15th Century and more commonly associated with the Wars of the Roses in England than their use in the New World.

Although it wasn't the only helmet used in the Americas, the 'Morion' has become synonymous with the conquistadors.

Conquistador infantrymen sometimes used arquebuses, which were primitive muskets. To increase accuracy, the gun would be rested on a mount before firing.

Swords were an important weapon for conquistadors and this particular example (below) was owned by Francisco Pizarro.

Crossbows were a curiously Medieval anomaly for the Spanish in the New World but native bows could not compete with them.

THE CONQUISTADORS WERE AIDED IN THEIR AMERICAN CONQUESTS BY A DEADLY SELECTION OF EQUIPMENT THAT STUNNED WHOLE EMPIRES INTO SUBMISSION

Although the introduction of European diseases such as smallpox assisted the Spanish in their subjection of stunned civilisations, their own weapons and equipment also played a significant part. The conquistadors were technologically superior to the indigenous Americans in every respect, although their equipment was surprisingly more Medieval than modern in some ways.

All Spanish soldiers carried the traditional staples of armour and swords, and both were largely manufactured in Toledo, Spain, which was renowned for its metalwork. Swords were unknown in pre-Columbian America but Toledo swords were formidable and would not pass inspection until they could survive full-force impact against armour or bend in a half-circle.

The armour that protected an early conquistador was usually a full plate suit that consisted of a breastplate, arm and leg greaves, a throat-protecting gorget and overlapping plates for elbows and shoulders. There was even armoured boots and gauntlets. This made the conquistador almost invulnerable to native blows, and contrasts with the traditional image of lightly armoured Spaniards in sub-tropical America.

To protect the head, a metal helmet was worn that included the famous 'Morion'. Made of heavy steel, the Morion had a pronounced crest and distinctive sweeping sides but it wasn't the only helmet used by the Spaniards. Other conquistadors preferred the Italian sallet that was popular during the 15th century or the cabasset, which was a simple steel cap.

As well as swords, Spaniards used other Medieval weapons such as the crossbow. Designed to defeat armoured knights, crossbows were accurate but they were bulky and slow to reload. More formidable missile-firing weapons swiftly replaced them: guns.

The Spanish introduced firearms and artillery into the Americas but their practical use was limited. Some infantrymen used an early musket known as an arquebus and although they were effective against one opponent, they were cumbersome and firing them was a complicated process. However, along with larger pieces such as falconet cannon, the noise of the guns terrified native soldiers who believed that the Spanish could create deadly thunder.

Perhaps the most effective weapon was cavalry. Horses were unknown in America and cavalrymen would use steel-tipped lances or swords in combat. The indigenous warriors had no response to these intimidating animals and the cavalry usually won the day in battle.

Against this barrage of weaponry, the Incas and Aztecs, who were only armed with clubs, maces and primitive bows, stood next to no chance against the relentless conquistadors.

Conquistador armour. This full suit demonstrates that early conquistadors were arguably armoured killing machines. In addition, horses were unfamiliar in America, giving the Europeans a significant logistical and combat advantage over the Inca.

them to convert to Christianity and announced that he was, "taking their land on behalf of the king of Spain." Upon hearing this the Incas reportedly, "took it as a joke and laughed heartily." The conquistadors also reconnoitred the area and confirmed that it was a rich land worth conquering. Pizarro departed with two Peruvian boys who would learn Spanish and act as interpreters for the returning expedition.

When Pizarro eventually returned to Panama, he immediately departed for Spain where he sought a personal audience with Charles V (king of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor). The king was shown precious jewels and items from Peru and the seal of royal approval was given.

Pizarro was named governor of Peru and also knighted as a member of the Order of Santiago, Spain's highest chivalric honour. From the outset, this was a campaign of conquest and the territory of the Inca Empire was to be renamed as 'New Castile.' Pizarro immediately returned to Panama and by the time the third expedition launched in December 1530, he had gathered a force of 180-200 men (including his brother Hernando and half-brothers Juan, Gonzalo and Francisco Martín de Alcántara), horses, guns and crossbows. It was time for a fateful date with history.

### A clash of cultures

For the Spanish, their invasion could not have come at a better time. The Inca Empire had been paralysed by the death of its capable emperor Huayna Capac, and his realm had descended into civil war between his sons Huáscar and Atahualpa. The latter had won but there were dark clouds on the horizon. Even before the Spanish arrived, the Incas were being decimated by a smallpox epidemic.

The Spanish had brought the disease to the Americas during the conquest of Mexico and it had rapidly travelled south to kill in large

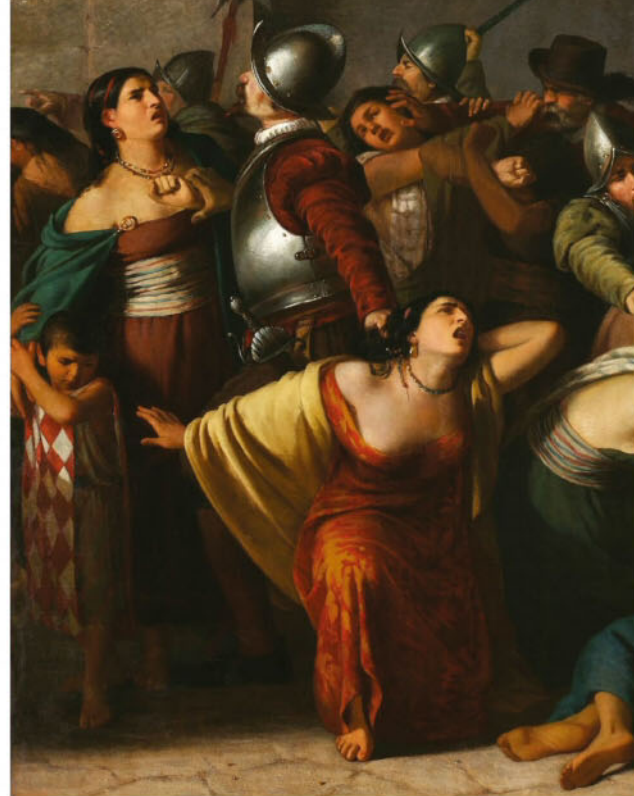
numbers. Because the indigenous Americans had no immunity to European diseases, the result was an apocalypse that possibly dwarfed the Black Death. Epidemiologists have concluded that perhaps 90 per cent of the pre-Columbian population died of the new diseases in all areas of the Americas within 50 years of the European arrival. The most high-profile victim of this pandemic was Huayna Capac, who was reputedly killed by smallpox and his death eerily foreshadowed the coming of the Spanish forces.

Pizarro landed on the Ecuadorian coast in 1531 and sent some procured jewels back to Almagro. Small Spanish reinforcements soon arrived, which boosted Pizarro's numbers to around 250 men. After defeating a force of Punian natives, the Spanish once again entered Tumbes but found it deserted and destroyed. It was a possible sign of civil war and Pizarro left 50 men at a new settlement at San Miguel de Piura before heading inland.

Meanwhile, the recently victorious Atahualpa and his huge army had proceeded to the Andean city of Cajamarca when messengers sent word of "strange people never seen before. These men were so bold that they did not fear dangerous things. They were white in appearance and had beards and they looked ferocious." This was the Spanish. They were marching on an Inca road and by an astonishing stroke of luck, Cajamarca was the nearest city of any size to the conquistadors. The Incas provided them with lodging and Atahualpa agreed to a formal meeting.

On 16 November 1532, Atahualpa came out to meet the strangers on the central plaza in a numerically imbalanced encounter. Between 30,000-40,000 Inca soldiers were camped above the town while Pizarro's motley band consisted of only 106 infantry, 62 cavalry and few pieces of artillery and handguns.

**"THE INCA CASUALTIES CANNOT BE VERIFIED BUT THEY CERTAINLY RAN INTO THOUSANDS, WHILE THE SPANISH REMARKABLY LOST NO MEN AND ONLY PIZARRO HIMSELF WAS SLIGHTLY WOUNDED IN THE HAND"**



## THE INCA CIVIL WAR

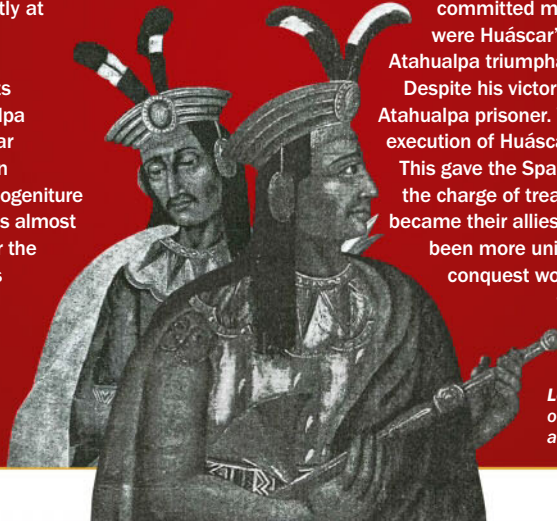
THE SPANISH WERE GREATLY ASSISTED IN THEIR CONQUEST BY THE BITTER DIVISIONS BETWEEN TWO ROYAL BROTHERS THAT THREATENED TO DESTROY AN EMPIRE

Before the arrival of the Spanish, the Incas were embroiled in a civil war that would have a tragically decisive impact on their survival as a civilisation.

The last Inca emperor who ruled with stability was Huayna Capac between 1493-1525. His death from either smallpox or measles (both introduced by Europeans to the north) eerily presaged the breakdown of his empire, but the beginning of this decline lay directly at the feet of his sons.

Huayna had allowed two of his sons, Huáscar and Atahualpa, to rule parts of the empire as regents during his reign. Huáscar ruled in Cuzco and Atahualpa in Quito. When Huayna died, the brothers went to war over who would succeed the throne. Unlike European monarchies, the Inca Empire had no system of primogeniture and illegitimate sons could become emperors. It was almost traditional for civil wars to break out among sons for the throne and although chaos usually ensued, the wars often produced formidable rulers who ultimately strengthened the empire.

*Right: Huayna Capac's named heir, Ninan Cuyochi, died a few days after his father, Huáscar succeeded the throne but this eventually led to a fraternal civil war*



This was the kind of war that was fought between 1527-32 but on this occasion, the empire would not survive. Huáscar and Atahualpa had attempted to rule jointly but it had failed and the empire split into factions. The people were loyal to Huáscar but the army supported Atahualpa and they won a fierce battle outside Cuzco in early 1532. Atahualpa's army also committed massacres against the Cañari people who were Huáscar's allies. Huáscar himself was captured and Atahualpa triumphantly became emperor.

Despite his victory, the Spanish soon arrived and took Atahualpa prisoner. While in captivity, Atahualpa ordered the execution of Huáscar so that he could not ally with the Spanish. This gave the Spanish the excuse to execute Atahualpa on the charge of treason and fratricide and the vengeful Cañari became their allies. It is highly probable that if the Incas had been more united and led by Huayna, then the Spanish conquest would have been far from certain. As it was, the traditional divisions that bizarrely underpinned Inca power proved to be their downfall.

*Left: Atahualpa was the last sovereign ruler of the Inca Empire but his reign was short and riddled with controversy*



*The funeral of Atahualpa. The last Inca emperor is surrounded by Catholic priests as he was forcibly coerced into converting to Christianity before his execution*

Atahualpa's own bodyguard consisted of 400 warriors, but Pizarro was completely unfazed and invited the emperor to dinner.

Upon his arrival, Atahualpa was approached by a Catholic priest who urged him to convert to Christianity, stating through an interpreter, "I am a priest of God, and I teach the Christians the things of God, and in like manner I come to teach you. What I teach is that which God says to us in this book." The priest then handed Atahualpa a *Bible* but to the emperor this was a useless gesture as the Incas had no written language and he had never seen a book before. The emperor held the book to his ear and shook it saying, "Why does the book not say anything to me?" Atahualpa threw it on the ground in disgust, which may have prompted the Spanish to attack.

Pizarro had trapped Atahualpa by separating him from his army and when the emperor threw the *Bible* aside the insult to Christianity

was an excuse to commence hostilities. The subsequent 'Battle of Cajamarca' should be more accurately described as a massacre. Pizarro's cannon were placed on a rooftop and his troops were hidden in buildings around the plaza. When the attack started, the Incas were completely taken by surprise and the Spanish had unknown military advantages.

The Incas had never seen horses and were not trained to resist their charge. The Spanish were also encased in armour, which made them almost invulnerable, and their steel swords easily penetrated Incan padded armour. The Inca weapons of clubs and maces made little impact, but the most devastating Spanish weapon was the gun. Their effect was more psychological than physical, because the inexperienced Incas were thrown into a panic by their thunderous noise. This made organised resistance impossible and the Spanish massacred the confused Incas for two hours,

with horsemen cutting down fleeing warriors in the fields around Cajamarca. Many were killed trying to defend Atahualpa but the victorious Pizarro captured him. The Inca casualties cannot be verified but they certainly ran into thousands, while the Spanish remarkably lost no men and only Pizarro himself was slightly wounded in the hand.

### Death of the Inca

In the aftermath of Cajamarca, Atahualpa was held in a cell. Pizarro lied to him stating, "I have conquered greater kingdoms than yours, and have defeated more powerful lords than you." He then offered the emperor a huge ransom in exchange for his freedom, which Atahualpa agreed to. Treasure soon arrived from across the empire as the Incas believed that Atahualpa was semi-divine and as such they could not fight the Spanish while their emperor was a prisoner. However, their submission to Spanish demands allowed Pizarro to send for more reinforcements. The ransom became a great fortune of 13,000 pounds of gold and 26,000 pounds of silver, much of it priceless works of art that were then melted down.

Nevertheless, Pizarro's position was still tenuous and Atahualpa's days were numbered. When the Spanish heard rumours that an Incan general was approaching Cajamarca, Pizarro

**"WHEN THE EMPEROR THREW THE BIBLE ASIDE, THE INSULT TO CHRISTIANITY WAS AN EXCUSE TO COMMENCE HOSTILITIES. THE SUBSEQUENT 'BATTLE OF CAJAMARCA' SHOULD BE MORE ACCURATELY DESCRIBED AS A MASSACRE"**

staged a mock trial and found Atahualpa guilty of idolatry, murder and treason against the Spanish. The emperor was forced to convert to Catholicism and was given the Christian name of 'Francisco Atahualpa' in 'honour' of Pizarro. After these humiliations, Atahualpa was then executed by strangulation on 26 July 1533 and at a stroke, the Inca Empire was doomed.

### Consolidating the conquest

After Atahualpa's death, Pizarro installed a puppet emperor called Tupac Huallpa before marching on the Incan capital Cuzco. The Spanish, numbering 300 men, fought a fierce battle at Vilcaconga where the Incas attacked from steep slopes and killed several horsemen.

Pizarro won the battle but it had also proved to the Incas that the Spaniards and their horses were mortal and vulnerable. However, Pizarro marched into Cuzco without a fight in late 1533 and the important city of Quito was captured the following year. Peru now belonged to Pizarro and the Spanish Empire, but their conquest was by no means assured and discontent emerged not just from the Incas but also from a former ally.

Diego de Almagro had been feeling aggrieved for some time as Pizarro had acquired a royal title and assumed all the conquered Inca lands for himself and his brothers. After 1535, Charles V ruled that the Incan Empire would be divided between Pizarro and Almagro but the former partners nearly came to blows over the ownership of Cuzco. Eventually they agreed that Almagro would lead an expedition into modern Chile. Pizarro hoped that Almagro would then drop his claim to Peru but he suddenly faced a major uprising that would almost topple his conquistador regime.

### The Siege of Cuzco

Tupac Huallpa died in 1533 and was succeeded by Manco Inca as puppet emperor but he soon realised that the Spanish were bent on conquest and escaped to form a resistance in the forests east of Cuzco. In May 1536, Manco laid siege to Cuzco with possibly 100,000 followers against just 196 conquistadors and a few thousand Incan collaborators led by Hernando Pizarro and his brothers.

Francisco himself was trapped in his newly founded city of Lima and spent most of his time trying to reinforce the Spanish at Cuzco. The siege ebbed and flowed for months and eventually Juan Pizarro was killed trying to take the key fortress of Saksaywaman.

On another occasion Hernando attempted to take Manco's headquarters at Ollantaytambo on horseback but the Incas flooded the approach and the Spanish were forced to retreat and regroup. The siege dragged on for ten months while Francisco fended off an attack on Lima by the Incan general Quizo Yupanqui in August 1536.

The Spanish at Cuzco were eventually relieved in March 1537 by the returning forces of Almagro from Chile and Manco withdrew to Vilcabamba where he was later killed. However, it was a bitter liberation. Almagro had found no wealth in Chile and resumed his claim to his share of Peru. To seal the bargain he took Hernando and Gonzalo Pizarro prisoner. In a bizarre twist, the conquistadors were now at war with each other.



*Below: The execution of Diego de Almagro. His death would eventually lead to the assassination of Pizarro*



*Pizarro eventually fell foul of his over-scheming and was assassinated in his own palace by his fellow Spaniards*

## “BEFORE HE DIED PIZARRO REPUTEDLY DREW A CROSS ON THE GROUND IN HIS OWN BLOOD CRYING ‘JESUS’ AS HE FELL”

### Civil war and murder

Gonzalo managed to escape Almagro and Hernando was released, but Francisco now wanted to destroy his old partner. He ordered Hernando to track down Almagro and his supporters and the two forces met at the Battle of Las Salinas near Cuzco on 26 April 1538. Hernando was victorious while Almagro lost 150 casualties and was subsequently captured. Hernando humiliated Almagro before having him garrotted on 8 July 1538.

The Pizarros were triumphant and for the next three years, Francisco administered New Castile from Lima and diligently sent shipments of wealth back to Spain known as the 'Royal Fifth'. At the same time, resentment was growing among newly arrived Spaniards who felt that all the plundered wealth belonged to the Pizarro brothers and the original conquistadors. These men supported Almagro's son (also called Diego) and on 26 June 1541 a band entered Pizarro's palace at Lima with a view to murder the conquistador.

Almagro the Younger's supporters killed Pizarro's defenders first including his half brother Francisco Martin de Alcántara before turning on the old conquistador. Despite possibly being 70 years of age, Pizarro went down fighting and killed at least one of his assailants before being stabbed to death. Before he died, Pizarro reputedly drew a cross on the ground in his own blood crying "Jesus" as he fell.

Pizarro was dead but his conquest was permanent. The Inca civilisation was destroyed by a horrendous combination of mass murder, rape and theft by the Spanish and the deadly smallpox that accompanied them. Along with the earlier incursions into Mexico, the colonisation of Peru turned Spain into the most powerful country in the world. Pizarro was its chief architect and his colossal nerve arguably largely achieved his improbable military victories. However, his greed caused untold misery and it was perhaps historic justice that he died surrounded by riches but murdered by his own men.



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## Heroes of the Medal of Honor

# FRANCIS EDWIN BROWNELL

This young Zouave recruit became a national hero by avenging the death of Colonel Elmer E Ellsworth, the first casualty of the American Civil War

WORDS DAVID A NORRIS

One of the first clashes of the American Civil War was a violent confrontation in the dark stairway of an Alexandria, Virginia hotel, on 24 May 1861. Two men were killed – one from a shotgun blast and another from a musket ball. Dead on the blood-spattered stairs was Colonel Elmer E Ellsworth, the first martyr of the Union cause. Holding a smoking musket, with a bayonet stained with blood of the colonel's killer, was Corporal Francis E Brownell. For a brief time early in the war, the corporal was a celebrity in the Union states. 16 years later, Brownell would receive the Medal of Honor.

Ardent secessionist James E Jackson leased the Marshall House, a well-known hotel in Alexandria, Virginia, in January 1861. Jackson started this new business in a time of political turmoil. Following the secession of South Carolina in December 1860, one Southern state after another left the United States to join the rebellious Confederate States. Virginia remained in the Union for the time being, amid growing secessionist sentiment.

Alexandria was in a tense situation. Although in a state that would soon leave the Union, the town was on the Potomac River. Just across the water from the secessionist town of Alexandria, Washington, DC, was rapidly filling with newly recruited volunteer Union soldiers, each one anxious to quash the impending rebellion of the Southern states.

By May 1861, Jackson flew a huge secession flag, a version of the 'Stars and Bars,' from a flagpole on the roof of his three and a half-storey hotel building. About 9.5 kilometres away from Alexandria, across the Potomac River, the defiant banner was visible to President Lincoln or anyone else using a spyglass on the grounds of the Executive Mansion.

Before dawn on 24 May, one day after Virginia left the United States and joined the Confederacy, Union soldiers in Washington received orders to occupy Alexandria and the nearby Virginia town of Arlington. Moving out with the other Union regiments was the 11th New York Infantry. Better known as the 'Fire Zouaves,' the colourful regiment was under the command of a personal friend of President Lincoln, 24-year-old Colonel Elmer E Ellsworth.

In 1859 Ellsworth had founded an elite militia company, the US Zouave Cadets, in New York. From illustrated newspapers, Americans were familiar with the exploits of the Zouaves of the French Army during the 1854-1856 Crimean War and the Second War of Italian Independence in 1859. Zouave units, recruited in Algeria beginning in the 1830s, were originally made of native-born North Africans.

Their uniforms drew on Eastern traditions, incorporating baggy trousers (often bright red), red sashes, short embroidered jackets, and turbans or fezzes for headgear. Ellsworth's company toured several states, generating publicity with their picturesque attire and inspiring numerous Zouave companies to be founded in northern and southern states. Several units of the Union and Confederate armies would wear Zouave uniforms.

After leaving the Zouave Cadets, Ellsworth found a place in the Springfield, Illinois law office of Abraham Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois. He became a close friend of the Lincoln family, and helped with the Lincoln presidential campaign in 1860.

After the Southern bombardment of Fort Sumter sparked the civil war on 12 April 1861, Lincoln asked Ellsworth to recruit a volunteer unit. With himself serving as colonel, Ellsworth established the New York Fire Zouaves (officially designated the 11th New York Infantry) in April

1861. Ellsworth designed the regiment's unique uniforms, which were modified versions of the Zouave outfits.

The Fire Zouaves were drawn primarily from the volunteer fire companies of New York. 21-year-old Francis Edwin Brownell, known as Frank, was a member of the Washington Volunteer Fire Company of Troy, New York. Brownell enlisted in the Fire Zouaves on 20 April. Eagerness and enthusiasm fired up Brownell's regiment, but the unit quickly obtained a reputation for rowdiness and indiscipline. As one of the first available volunteer regiments, the hastily trained Fire Zouaves were sent to protect Washington, DC.

On 9 May, the unit responded to an alarm of fire at Washington's famous Willard Hotel. Reaching the scene before the city's own firemen, the Fire Zouaves broke into an unmanned fire station, drew out a fire engine, began fighting the blaze, and saved the hotel from destruction.

After the secession of Virginia, US authorities moved to secure the now-hostile cities of Arlington and Alexandria, lest they serve as launching points for attacks on the Union capital city. About 5.30am, the Fire Zouaves landed at Alexandria. Ellsworth led a detachment to seize the telegraph office. On the way, the Union soldiers spotted the secession flag atop the Marshall House. The colonel, several soldiers including Brownell, and *New York Tribune* correspondent Edward H House entered the hotel and ascended the stairs.

Many contemporary reports referred to Brownell as a private, but records indicate he had been promoted to corporal by this time. The Fire Zouaves had been hastily provided with a variety of different weapons. Brownell carried a .58 calibre Model 1855 rifle musket, tipped with a sword bayonet.

**“QUICK AS LIGHTNING BROWNELL  
DISCHARGED HIS PIECE, KILLING JACKSON  
IMMEDIATELY, HITTING HIM BETWEEN THE  
EYES AND FINISHED THE JOB BY THRUSTING  
HIS SWORD BAYONET INTO HIS BREAST”**

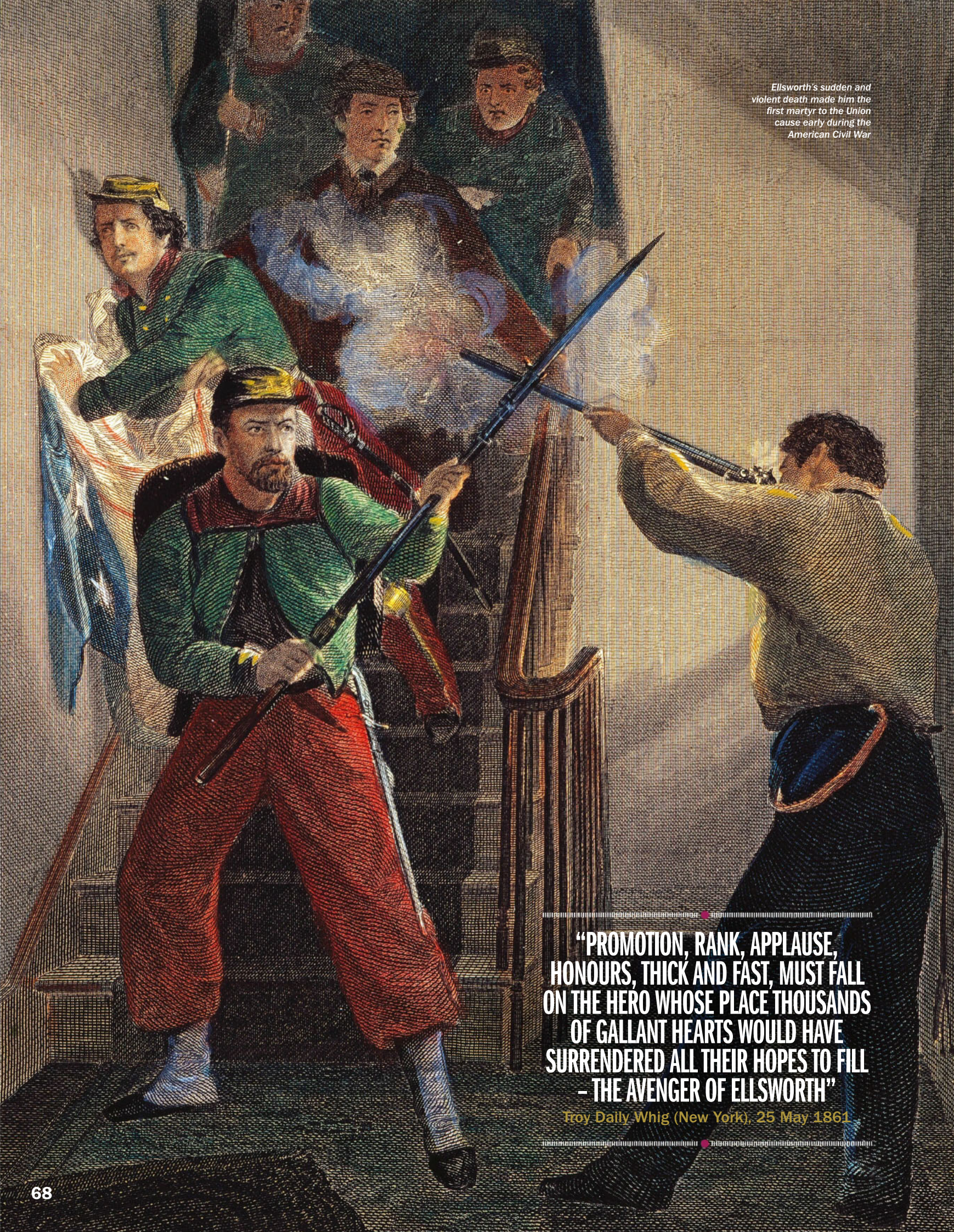
A *New York Times* account of Brownell's actions to  
avenge the death of Ellsworth from 26 May 1861

*Corporal Francis Brownell  
killed the man who shot his  
commanding officer*



*Right: Ellsworth's death was a popular subject for pro-Union patriotic stationery, prints, sheet music and buttons*





Ellsworth's sudden and violent death made him the first martyr to the Union cause early during the American Civil War

**"PROMOTION, RANK, APPLAUSE, HONOURS, THICK AND FAST, MUST FALL ON THE HERO WHOSE PLACE THOUSANDS OF GALLANT HEARTS WOULD HAVE SURRENDERED ALL THEIR HOPES TO FILL - THE AVENGER OF ELLSWORTH"**

Troy Daily Whig (New York), 25 May 1861

A man appeared near the stairway, apparently just awakened and hastily dressed in trousers and a shirt. Ellsworth asked him, "Who put that flag up?" The man replied, "I don't know. I am a boarder here", and the Union soldiers left him and continued up the stairs. On the top floor, Ellsworth leaned out of a dormer window that was next to the flagpole. He gripped the halyards, lowered the flag, and cut it loose. Then Ellsworth headed back downstairs with Brownell in front of him.

Ellsworth descended the stairs behind Brownell, rolling up the big flag into a manageable bundle. When Brownell was half a dozen steps from the second floor, the man they had questioned on the way up confronted them with an English-made double-barrelled shotgun. He was not a hotel guest, but the proprietor, Jackson.

Jackson pointed the shotgun at the soldiers. Brownell pushed the shotgun away with his musket, but Jackson immediately raised the weapon again. Pointing the gun upward at Ellsworth, he fired one of the barrels. The blast struck Ellsworth in the chest above the heart, from a distance of perhaps 1.2 metres. The colonel uttered the words, "Oh, God," then toppled forward dead.

Jackson then turned on Brownell, who raised his musket. Both men fired point-blank at each other at nearly the same instant. Jackson's second shot missed Brownell, and the shotgun slugs slammed into the wainscoting. Brownell's musket round hit Jackson on the bridge of his nose. An instant later, the Zouave impaled the dead Virginian with his bayonet, and Jackson's body tumbled down a flight of stairs.

Jackson's wife heard the shots. Finding her husband slain, she "uttered the most agonising cries," according to the *Herald*, and "she remained a long time in the wildest state of frenzy." Brownell and the other six soldiers ordered the guests back to their rooms and threatened to shoot anyone who opened their doors. Meanwhile, the rest of Company A of the Fire Zouaves were concerned that Ellsworth had not returned from the Marshall House. More

●

**"WASHINGTON, MAY 24,  
1861. FATHER: COLONEL  
ELLSWORTH WAS SHOT DEAD  
THIS MORNING. I KILLED THE  
MURDERER. FRANK"**

Brownell's telegram to his father

●

soldiers arrived to secure the hotel and the colonel's body was borne away on a litter made of muskets.

Ellsworth's body was taken across the river to Washington, and later lay in state at the East Room of the White House. After a memorial service, a funeral procession accompanied the colonel's body to the train depot for shipment to New York. The flag seized by Ellsworth, fastened to the musket tipped with the bayonet run through Jackson's body, was carried in the procession by Corporal Brownell.

News of Ellsworth's 'assassination' quickly flew across the Union. His death intensified feeling in a nation still coming to grips with the idea that it had fallen into civil war. The 44th New York Infantry took the nickname of the Ellsworth Avengers.

Regarded as the first martyr for the Union cause, Ellsworth was commemorated in prints, mass-produced photographs and pictorial buttons, sheet music and patriotic stationery and envelopes. Souvenir hunters cut numerous patches from the secession flag Ellsworth captured and hacked away splinters and fragments of the Marshall House stairs, some of them stained with the colonel's blood.

Southern sympathisers took the opposite tack, lauding Jackson for sacrificing his life for the flag of their new country. At an inquest held on 25 May, a pro-Southern jury in Alexandria

concluded that, "Jackson came to his death at the hands of the troops of the United States, while in the defence of his private property, in his own house." Jackson was praised as a hero in Southern newspapers and a collection was raised for his widow and children.

For avenging Ellsworth's death, Brownell was commissioned a second lieutenant in the 11th US Infantry. In 1863, as a first lieutenant, he was seriously wounded at the Battle of Chancellorsville. Later that year, he was discharged because of his wounds. After the war, Brownell worked as a clerk with the US Pension Office. He died in 1894.

The Fire Zouaves were later caught up in the rout of the Union forces at the First Battle of Manassas on 21 July 1861. They were disbanded in 1862. Heavily damaged in an 1873 fire, the Marshall House was rebuilt and stood until it was torn down in the 1950s.

Brownell received the Medal of Honor in 1877. The shooting at the Marshall House was the earliest incident of the Civil War for which anyone was awarded the medal. (Assistant surgeon Bernard J D Irwin received the Medal of Honor for conduct in a 13-14 January 1861 action against Apache Indians in Arizona before the Civil War began.)

In 1889, Brownell presented the musket and bayonet he carried into the Marshall House, as well as the shotgun fired by Jackson, to the Smithsonian Institution's United States National Museum. Minus many bits cut away by Victorian-era souvenir hunters, the four-seven metre flag Ellsworth hauled down from the Marshall House roof is in the collections of the New York State Military Museum in Albany.

Several Union soldiers had already died by 24 May 1861, notably four men killed by pro-Southern rioters in Baltimore on 19 April. But the larger-than-life personality of Colonel Elmer E Ellsworth made him into the first icon for the Union cause after his sudden death. Ever after associated with the Marshall House incident, Brownell was remembered for the rest of his life as "the Avenger of Ellsworth."

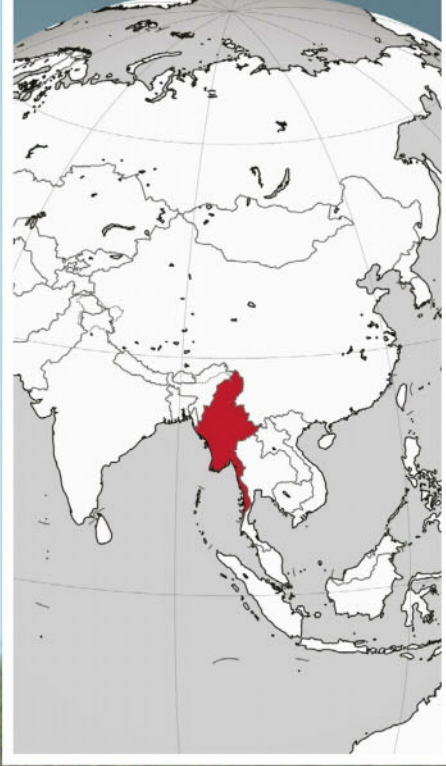


A fatal confrontation on 24 May 1861 was triggered by a secession flag flying from the Marshall House in Alexandria, Virginia

*Opium poppies were always a seasonal cash crop in highland Burma, until the 1970s heroin boom turned it into a commodity*

**“SO ENTRANCING WAS ITS ORIENTAL SPLENDOUR, BOTH RUDYARD KIPLING AND GEORGE ORWELL WERE MOVED TO WRITE ABOUT THE LAND WITH AWE”**





## BRIEFING

# Myanmar's insurgency

Southeast Asia's most troubled country has been at war for 70 years. With its dreaded armed forces still in control, is there hope for Myanmar?

WORDS MIGUEL MIRANDA

**F**or thousands of years, the snows of the Himalayas have fed three great serpentine rivers in Southeast Asia. Each one traces its own immense distance on its path to the ocean – the Brahmaputra, the Ayeyarwady and the Mekong. These rivers collectively influenced the course of civilisation, its apogee and ebb in three distinct cultures. But alongside one of them came to exist a patchwork country forever at odds with itself.

When the first British adventurers entered Burma on their quest to reach fabled Cathay – or China – some 400 years ago, the climate and terrain of this tropical quagmire was so unforgiving that it took generations before Western imperialism returned.

Over 64 years from 1824 until 1886, in events later organised into three convenient Anglo-Burmese Wars, the Burmese were subdued with gunfire and economic subterfuge before joining the crown jewel of the British Empire, India.

The annexation of Burma left its conquerors with a headache because there was never a singular Burmese state or empire. For British soldiers and administrators, their foremost task was dealing with rulers called Sawbwas – little more than nominal chiefs over remote valleys – and granting limited autonomy to ethnic groups.

From a geographic perspective, the Ayeyarwady's wetlands and the realm of Mandalay were the true extent of the British Raj's administration. This was the sum total of what was called Lower Burma. It was in the wilds of Upper Burma, though, where outlaws thrived outside the stern gaze of the state.

Ambitious plans were drawn up to import thousands of Indian soldiers and civil servants who would help establish order over this difficult nation.

A multitude of people were spread across the Ayeyarwady, later corrupted into Irrawaddy. There were the ancient Bamar, the incorrigible Kachins, Kayins, ethnic Han Chinese, Hmong, Naga, Shan and Tai. Other than the Medieval kingdom of Pagan, city states and fiefdoms were the constants of Burmese civilisation, which was shaped by both Hinduism and Buddhism. Thanks to the British, a late arriving Christianity found a willing flock among a distinct ethnic group called the Kayin, also known as the Karen highlanders.

The British did have a lush colony to themselves. Burma was an immense country that offered geographic linkages to the Malay Peninsula and Singapore. Raw opium could be transported over land and delivered to ships bound for the Chinese coast. There was crude oil in Burma and an endless supply of jade and gemstones. In the first half of the 20th century, Burma maintained its place as Asia's largest rice producer. So entrancing was its oriental splendour, both Rudyard Kipling and George Orwell were moved to write about the land with awe.

Of course, the British grip on Burma was interrupted by WWII. With the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy barrelling across Southeast Asia, the country was seen as a vital buffer to thwart an Allied counteroffensive from India. When the Japanese sought to conquer Burma, they first cultivated local proxies by transporting them to Hainan Island for training.

## FOREVER WITHOUT PEACE

1824

A minor dispute between King Alaungpaya of Rangoon and the British East India Company leads to an inconclusive war. A second conflict takes place in 1852, with dismal results for the Burmese.

1881

Relishing its local autonomy, the Karen ethnic group organises a national association to prepare for statehood and assert its rights amid increasing British influence on Burma's domestic politics.

1886

The Third Anglo-Burmese War begins in November 1885. Within two months, the city of Mandalay is in British hands. Burma is annexed on 1 January and a colonial administration is imposed.



These would-be nationalists, who had no love for the British, were organised into the Burma Independence Army (BIA). At the core of this fledgling paramilitary force were the 30 Comrades. Among them were two young firebrands who would shape Burma's future: Aung San and Ne Win.

When the Japanese were driven out of Burma in 1945, the remnants of the BIA reconciled with the Allies and cast itself as a political party willing to negotiate for total independence. Once this was accomplished, a thriving former colony with bright prospects began its descent into a dark age.

### Permanent civil war

With help from the British, preparations for Burma's independence were underway by 1947. The nation's geography called for a federated republic but other than the Panglong Agreement, few concrete steps were taken to appease the Karen, Kachin, Shan and Mon ethnic groups that inhabited the country's border regions.

The greatest setback was the assassination of General Aung San. His political party, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), won the first national elections in April 1947. Three months later, gunmen loyal to politician and former prime minister, U Saw, barged into a morning conference of the AFPFL's executive council and shot up the entire room, killing seven – including Aung San and his brother.

Upon achieving full independence as the Union of Burma on 4 January, the mercurial Prime Minister U Nu had the thankless task of staving off anarchy. Having neither the vision nor the acumen to bring his countrymen together, within a year a civil war erupted between Rangoon, the mutinous Karen and the Communist Party of Burma (CPB).

The war's beginning was hastened by the fragile composition of the armed forces, the Tatmadaw, who were known for their olive drab battle dress and quaint flop hats. Made up of cadres from the BIA and leftover units from the British administration, the original 15 battalions had very little cohesion. When one half of these units mutinied, the regions of what the British called Upper Burma drifted away from Rangoon's authority. So, just like their colonisers, Burma's government had to conquer the rest of the country for themselves.

An ethno-nationalist slant soon took hold of the Tatmadaw as only full Burman – or Bamar – recruits swelled its numbers. By 1958, de facto martial law was in place to quell additional revolts by the Kachin, Shan, Mon, Arakan and Muslim separatists on the southern coasts. Four years later, Aung San's former comrade in arms, defence minister Ne Win, launched a successful coup d'etat and cemented the military's control over Burma.

A leader of baffling contradictions, Ne Win steered his country towards socialism, a trend that culminated with the Burma Socialist Program Party in 1974, which was supposed to bring the national economy under government control. As the plan languished, the absence of the once dependable Indian bureaucracy left obscure military-vetted councils to run the government, making the Tatmadaw a state-within-a-state. Slowly but surely Burma established itself as Southeast Asia's poorest country

An unintended consequence of this long decline was its rise as a narco-state. Covert operations by France and the United States during the 1950s empowered farmers and smugglers of opium in the 'Golden Triangle'. Flush with money, equipment and weapons, local warlords in Laos, and then Burma, founded entire plantations to deliver their products around the world.

Burma's military brass never tolerated the drug trafficking in the north east of their country and tried for years to crush the scourge. In the 1950s, an alliance of convenience between remnants of the Chinese Kuomintang, defeated in their country's civil war in 1949, and Shan tribes turned their border redoubt into a drug emporium. During the 1970s, a former militiaman and ex-convict named Khun Sa emerged as the Golden Triangle's most notorious merchant who bankrolled his own private militia, the Mong Tai Army. For all his faults, the soft-spoken chain smoker suppressed drug use among his people, the Shan ethnic group, and lobbied for his region's independence from Burma. More than a war on drugs, it was the ballooning production from Afghan poppy fields in the 2000s that dimmed the lustre of the Golden Triangle.

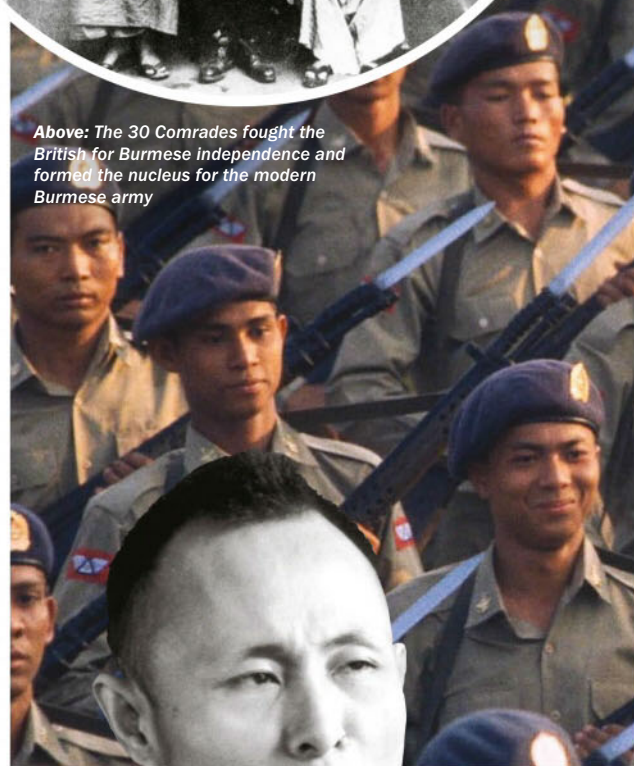
More damaging than the drug trade was Ne Win's own erratic behaviour. In 1987, he ordered the national currency, the kyat, to be denominated into notes divisible by nine – his lucky number – and this had disastrous consequences for citizens. Burma's increasing dependence on foreign aid and the permanent state of war outside Rangoon fuelled dissent.

It took an altercation in a Rangoon café for a protest movement to start. The resulting marches climaxed with the 8888 revolt on 8 August 1988. The regime's reaction was swift and brutal but Ne Win was forced to step down. The violence did bring another colourful personality into Burma's political scene however, the daughter of Aung San.

Giving politics a wide berth, she relocated to Britain and married Oxford scholar Michael Aris, with who she had two sons. If it weren't for her mother's illness and confinement in Rangoon Hospital, Aung San Suu Kyi wouldn't have



Above: The 30 Comrades fought the British for Burmese independence and formed the nucleus for the modern Burmese army



Ardent nationalist and military hero, the late General Aung San is revered as Myanmar's lost champion. He was assassinated by his political enemies in 1947

#### 1948

After Burma is granted the status of a Crown Colony in 1937, local nationalists agitate for full independence. The British leave for good on 4 January and the Union of Burma is created.

#### 1949

Disagreements over the structure of Burma's government boil over into civil war. Kachin rebels attempt to march on Rangoon but are thwarted during the battle of Insein on 31 January.

#### 1962

Former defence minister Ne Win stages a successful coup d'etat. The dictator of Burma rules for 25 years. Drug trafficking and ethnic strife plague his impoverished country.



#### 1967

A diplomatic row with Taiwan and fear of an invasion by Communist China trigger anti-Chinese riots. This persistent xenophobia is later directed at minorities as the economy begins to unravel.

#### 1974

To prolong his grip on power, Ne Win reestablishes the Burma Socialist Program Party, a political and economic movement to modernise Burma. It achieves the opposite, however.





**“IN 1987, HE ORDERED THE NATIONAL CURRENCY, THE KYAT, TO BE DENOMINATED INTO NOTES DIVISIBLE BY NINE – HIS LUCKY NUMBER – AND THIS HAD DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR CITIZENS”**



*The 400,000-strong Tatmadaw, as the Myanmar armed forces are called, have enjoyed decades of absolute rule in their country*

visited her home to witness scores of bloodied and injured student protesters crowding the emergency room, fearing for their lives.

Within a month, Aung San Suu Kyi was propelled from silent observer to activist who helped organise the National League for Democracy (NLD). It was a rare kind of opposition group, unarmed, multifaceted and clamouring for change in a society run like a barracks. For Burma's gruff generals, it was the final straw. Aung San Suu Kyi was put under house arrest in a residence that offered a splendid view of Rangoon's Inya Lake. She spent her days either meditating or playing piano. An NLD election win in 1990 and the Nobel Peace Prize were pyrrhic victories. She remained cut off from her family, her people and the world for two decades.

**An army with a country**

The rise of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and its leader, General Saw Maung, did produce a serious reform movement, albeit to enhance the Tatmadaw's privileges.

First came a PR blitz. The SLORC switched to a friendlier handle, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), and its official head was the inscrutable General Than Shwe, who was appointed in 1992. It then delved into revisionism by inventing 'Myanmar' to replace Burma. China was welcomed with open arms and the newfangled alliance was consummated in 1990 when Myanmar ordered \$1 billion worth of fighter jets from Beijing.

Cozying to China also helped dilute the influence of the Communist Party of Burma, whose activities in the Kokang region of Shan State were intertwined with drug trafficking. This was useful in Rangoon's final push to demolish the Golden Triangle and bring down its most notorious warlord, Khun Sa. Persistent government offensives in the mid-1990s forced Khun Sa underground. In 1996, he negotiated his 'retirement', disarmed his private army and went into self-imposed exile in Rangoon where he lived until he passed away in 2007.

Khun Sa's fall didn't end Myanmar's drug trade, however. The resulting power vacuum was exploited by the United Wa State Army (WSA), an organisation of ethnic Chinese migrants who are also keen on self-determination. With involvement in all sorts of illicit activities, including narcotics, the Wa eventually rose to become Myanmar's strongest militia with anywhere between 20,000-30,000 fighters.

While the international community condemned Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest, SPDC's mandate over Myanmar allowed the Tatmadaw's chain of command to exploit the economy. In the north, where local militias weren't posing too much of a threat, entire mountains were excavated and dug up for jade and other precious stones that were exported

**1988**

The collapse of the national currency and skyrocketing inflation drives workers and students to pro-democracy protests from March until August. Ne Win steps down and is replaced by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) on 8 September.

**1989**

To save the government from total collapse, the country is renamed Myanmar Naing-ngan by the SLORC junta and relations with China, another autocracy, are cultivated. Elections are scheduled the following year.

**1990**

National elections result in a landslide win for neophyte Aung San Suu Kyi. Fearing another popular revolt, the SLORC puts her under permanent house arrest – she ends up winning the Nobel Prize.



**1994**

The Karen National Union, a major opposition party, breaks apart as Buddhist members switch sides against their Christian brethren. Ceasefire talks are held between ethnic rebels and the military junta.



to China. This multibillion-dollar enterprise that wrought havoc on the environment reportedly put millions into the pockets of Myanmar's generals.

Perhaps the greatest outrage during the SPDC-era of the 1990s and early 2000s was the institutionalisation of ethnic cleansing and slavery. As a carry over of the Ne Win 'four cuts' counterinsurgency strategy and a reflection of military attitudes to rural communities, the Tatmadaw became notorious for conscripting child soldiers and porters for its operations. Of course, the nature of these 'operations' varied. While it sometimes involved combat, railways, roads and entire bases were constructed under the military's guidance with children mixed among a labour pool collected from nearby villages.

The military junta wasn't immune from strange decisions either. At some point after the turn of the century, a secret project was launched to build a city in central Myanmar. The existence of Naypyidaw, with its enormous roads and golden pagodas, was only revealed in 2005. This sparkling new 'capital' had apartment blocks, official residences, an airport, megalomaniacal palaces and a zoo, as well as amenities for the armed forces, bureaucrats and occasional tourists. But to this day, Naypyidaw is devoid of traffic, cars and the usual bustle of a teeming metropolis even though it's larger than most European cities.

With billions of dollars from mining, logging and loans pouring into the Tatmadaw's coffers, the importation of foreign weapons continued for the rest of the decade. This could be justified by necessity. When its constant insistence on truces and peace talks failed, the Tatmadaw faced up to 24 different ethnic rebel groups. Yet advertising its prowess justified battle tanks from China, armoured vehicles from Ukraine, howitzers from Israel, MiGs and surface-to-air missiles from Russia and Singaporean assistance in manufacturing small arms and ordnance.

### Disciplined democracy

After the burden of putting down multiple ethnic rebellions, the stress of the popular demonstrations in 2007 led by monks, and the ravages of Cyclone Nargis in 2008, the SPDC paused to reflect on its place in the world.

What launched the period of 'disciplined democracy' was a new constitution in 2008. This had specific provisions to ensure the armed forces' role in society remained secure. For example, 25 per cent of seats in parliament were reserved for Tatmadaw officers and current and former soldiers were immune from any criminal prosecution. The offices of the defence, interior and border affairs ministries were reserved for the armed forces. It even forbade citizens with foreign spouses from holding office – this one was meant to bar Aung San Suu Kyi from ever entering politics.



The Mong Tai Army, paid for and equipped by the drug lord Khun Sa, had 6,000 fighters at its peak



Karen National Union Guerrillas stand guard during the 57th anniversary of Karen Resistance Day in the Jungle Stronghold of Mu Aye Pu

#### 1997

Wracked by sanctions, Myanmar officially joins the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). This has little affect on domestic politics, where persecution and violence are still directed at minorities.

#### 2007

A series of protests in Rangoon led by Buddhist monks is dubbed the Saffron Revolution. The military and police suppress the peaceful revolt, drawing international condemnation.

#### 2008

A devastating cyclone sweeps into Myanmar in May. Dubbed 'Nargis', it leaves more than 2 million homeless and kills around 100,000 people. The economy is left in tatters.

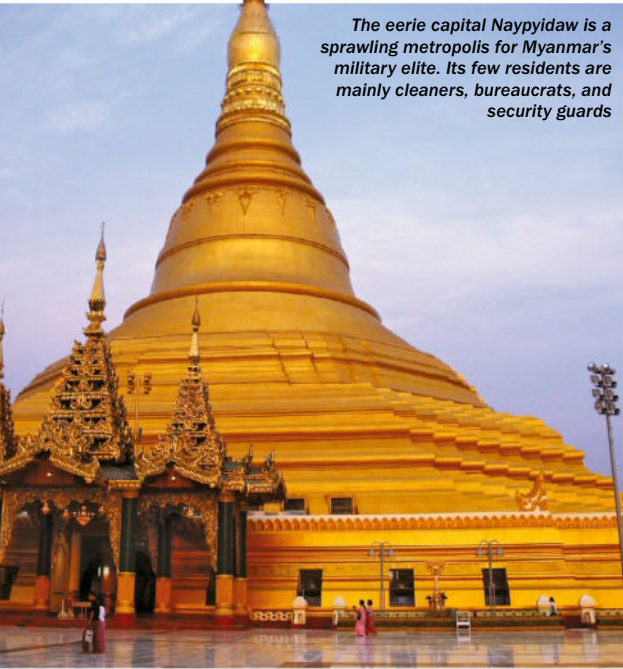


#### 2008

To stave off further unrest and crippling sanctions, a new constitution is created that allows national elections to be organised by the armed forces. Myanmar's slow democratisation has begun in earnest.

#### 2009

Myanmar's ruling junta launches a series of reconciliation talks to settle decades-old feuds with minorities. They offer rebel groups the opportunity to become Border Guard Forces in their respective territories.



The eerie capital Naypyidaw is a sprawling metropolis for Myanmar's military elite. Its few residents are mainly cleaners, bureaucrats, and security guards



Even if national elections in 2010 produced a civilian leader in President Thein Sein, he was still a former general and the Tatmadaw's behaviour toward its domestic foes was unchanged. Monks and activists imprisoned in the 2007 Saffron Revolution languished behind bars. Draconian laws stayed in place for citizens who mocked public officials. The campaigns against the Karen and the Kachin didn't let up. Most disturbing was the unchecked rise of Buddhist nationalism.

In 2013, an altercation at a pawnshop in Meikhtila, a town in central Myanmar, caused a small riot that pitted local residents against their Muslim neighbours. In a matter of days, armed mobs attacked Muslim neighbourhoods in several towns and cities, leaving dozens slaughtered.

During the previous year, thousands of Rohingya, an ethnic minority of Bengali descent, from Rakhine State were herded into concentration camps and left to starve. These separate events form part of a growing Islamophobia within Myanmar orchestrated by the government. Though Muslim communities have existed in Burma for centuries, the decades following independence have seen its fair share of ethnic hatred. Targeting Muslims in particular arose from revenge killings over imagined slights. In 1997, rumours of intermarriage between Muslim men and Buddhist women triggered riots, furthering a cultural divide that has since deteriorated into mutual animosity.

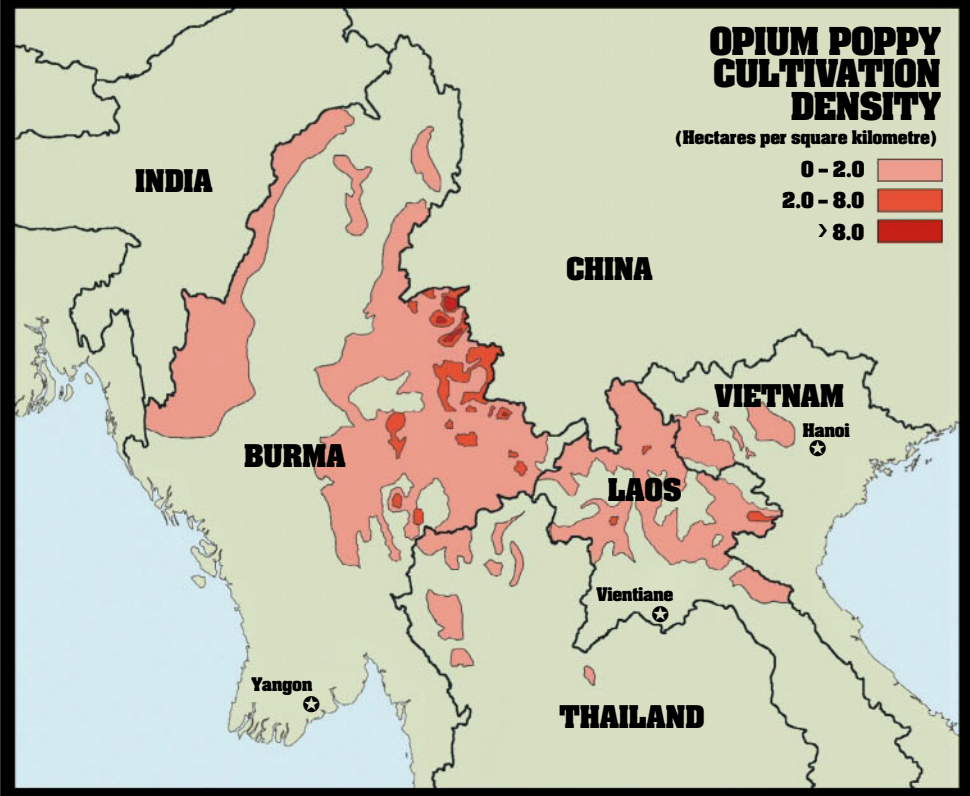
The destruction of Afghanistan's Bamiyan monuments in 2001 and local prejudices fuel nationalists like the monk Wirathu who calls himself 'the Buddhist [Osama] bin Laden' and advertises alleged Muslim atrocities on Buddhists as part of his xenophobic '969' movement. While Wirathu's abhorrent conduct isn't representative of the greater Buddhist monkhood, the Rohingya's plight does reflect badly on Myanmar's new government.

Violence isn't uncommon in Rakhine. During the 1950s, a short-lived Muslim separatist movement fought for independence. In the 1970s, the Rohingya fled to Bangladesh after the Ne Win regime removed their citizenship, reducing them to illegal immigrants cut off from jobs and education. In a country that is 90 per cent Buddhist, the Rohingya's paltry numbers – anywhere from 200,000 to 1 million – make them easy targets. Journalists are forbidden entry but aid groups and the UN have amassed substantial testimonies of executions, displacement, rape on the Rohingya.

Despite claims that Islamic terrorism might plant deep roots in Myanmar, the horror of an entire people being dispossessed is a matter beyond speculation. The Rohingya are just the latest victims of a martial state addicted to punishing its citizens. The world shouldn't be fooled by Myanmar's pretence at freedom and openness. It remains a country held hostage by its armed forces, a nightmare where a single institution holds power over life and death.

## THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Towards the end of the 20th century, it was estimated that at least 50 per cent of the world's opium supply came from the lawless jungles straddling Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. This narco-paradise was protected by tribal armies who used to assist French and American clandestine operations in the 1950s and 60s. Even when its fortunes have ebbed, the 'Golden Triangle' remains a very dangerous place.



### 2010

National elections are held on 7 November after two decades of martial law under the SLORC. General Thein Sein is elected president. Military rule officially ends in 2011.

### 2013

Mob violence in the city of Meikhtila leads to similar outbreaks across Myanmar, pitting Buddhists against Muslims. In the coastal Rakhine State, local residents and police persecute the Rohingya.

Images: Getty, Shutterstock

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# CHIEFTAIN

## MK10

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

Once the most powerful armoured fighting vehicle in the world, the British Chieftain raised the standard for the main battle tank

### SPECIFICATIONS

**COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:** UNITED KINGDOM  
**MANUFACTURER:** LEYLAND MOTORS  
**ROLE:** MAIN BATTLE TANK **CREW:** 4  
**MAXIMUM SPEED:** 48KM/H (30MPH) ROAD; 30KM/H (19MPH) CROSS-COUNTRY  
**MAXIMUM RANGE:** 500KM (310 MILES)  
**WEIGHT:** 55 TONNES (62 TONS)  
**POWER:** LEYLAND MOTORS SIX-CYLINDER, L60 MULTIFUEL, 850-BHP ENGINE  
**ARMAMENT:** PRIMARY L11A5 120MM RIFLED GUN;  
SECONDARY 2X 7.62MM MACHINE GUNS  
**ARMOUR PROTECTION:** TURRET 195MM; GLACIS 120MM;  
FLANKS 38MM

**“THE CHIEFTAIN EMERGED AS A COMPOSITE OF THE CONQUEROR’S 120MM RIFLED GUN AND THE OPTIMAL WEIGHT AND MOBILITY CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CENTURION”**

**T**he hard lessons of World War II prompted the UK to take the lead in developing the concept of the main battle tank (MBT). While it was in design before the end of the conflict, the iconic Centurion rose to pre-eminence among the Western tanks of the early Cold War era. By the mid-1950s, however, it was apparent that the sheer numbers of Soviet heavy tanks in service – including the IS-3 and T-10 with their formidable 122mm guns, and the T-54/55 mounting 100mm weapons – required a substantive response.

The initial British attempt to achieve superiority over Soviet armour was the FV214 Conqueror. At 64 tonnes, the Conqueror was heavy. It was also expensive and unpopular with crews – only 189 were completed.

Although the Conqueror was a great disappointment, the solution was at hand. Engineers at Leyland Motors, a primary contractor with the Centurion, assessed the performance of that tank during the Korean War, and by the end of the decade a prototype designated the FV4201 was ready for evaluation.

Incorporating the British Army’s doctrine of crew survivability, achieved through superior armour protection and firepower while also recognising NATO standardisation efforts, the Chieftain emerged as a composite of the Conqueror’s 120mm rifled gun and the optimal weight and mobility characteristics of the Centurion. The Ministry of Defence approved the design in May 1963 and the true second-generation main battle tank of the Cold War, officially the Chieftain Mark V MBT, entered service in 1966.

*The 120mm L11A5 rifled gun was originally the primary armament of the defunct Conqueror tank, aimed at achieving parity with contemporary Soviet armoured fighting vehicles*

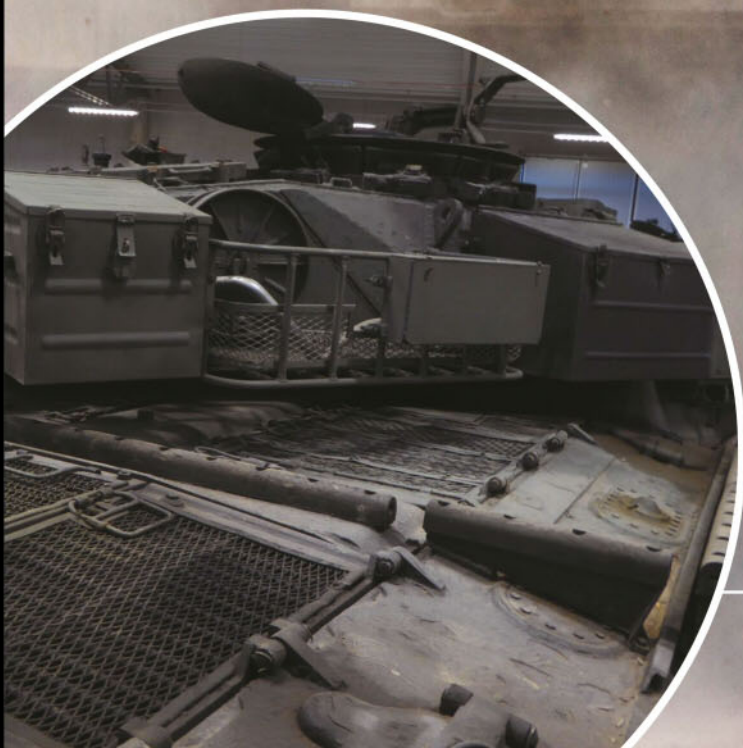


## ENGINE

Throughout its service life, the Leyland L60 engine proved problematic for the Chieftain. Based on a German Junkers Jumo diesel engine design introduced in the 1930s, the installation of the two-stroke, six-cylinder L60 required the lengthening of the tank's hull, which added significant weight. The inadequacy of the earliest L60 was readily apparent with a mechanical failure rate that exceeded 90 per cent, and several modifications were required to enhance overall performance. The earliest L60 engines produced approximately 450 bhp. However, during the 1970s, the design was improved with better lining seals and output increased to a peak of 850 bhp.

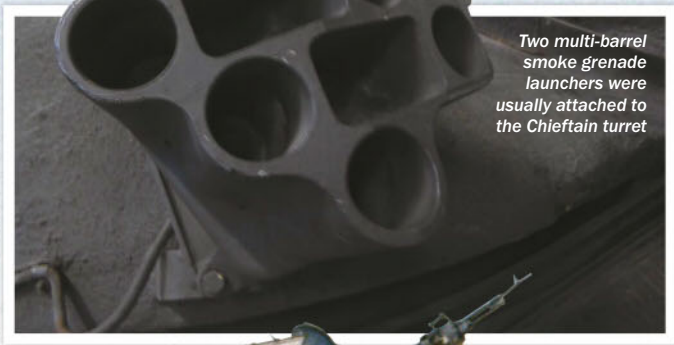
*This Chieftain is shown rolling along a dirt road as its main weapon is secured and the engine exhaust mixes with a cloud of dust*

**“THE INSTALLATION OF THE TWO-STROKE, SIX-CYLINDER L60 REQUIRED THE LENGTHENING OF THE TANK’S HULL, WHICH ADDED SIGNIFICANT WEIGHT”**



*Left: The deck of the Chieftain was protected by the thinnest armour coverage, while providing access to crew and engine compartments and stowage areas*





Two multi-barrel smoke grenade launchers were usually attached to the Chieftain turret



Right: The impressive length of the Chieftain's main gun is apparent in this photo



Painted in desert camouflage, some Chieftains may still be active with the Iranian, Jordanian and Omani armies

**"THE L11A5 WAS CAPABLE OF FIRING SIX AND TEN ROUNDS PER MINUTE WITH EFFECTIVE RANGE APPROACHING 2,600 METERS"**

Right: Secondary smoke grenade launchers are visible on either side of the turret. Note the cupola-mounted 7.62mm L37A1 machine gun

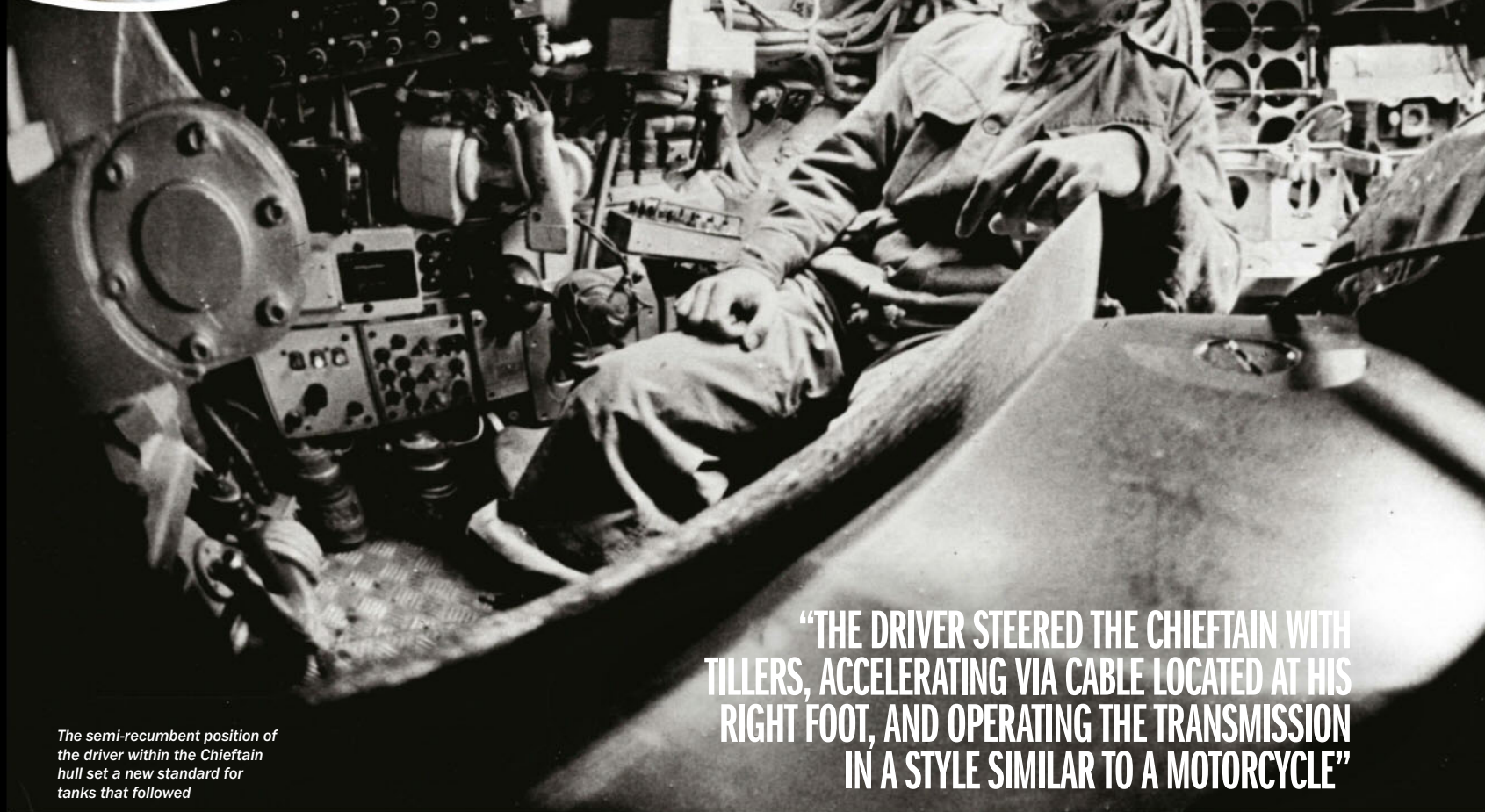
## ARMAMENT

Royal Ordnance Factories developed the 120mm L11 rifled gun during the late 1950s, and its main production variant, the L11A5, became the standard production model that equipped the Chieftain. The longest gun in NATO use, the L11A5 was capable of firing six to ten rounds per minute with effective range approaching 2,600 meters (2,800 yards) depending on the ammunition in use. The weapon fired a variety of ordnance, including APDS (armour piercing discarding sabot) and HESH (high explosive squash head) rounds propelled by bag charges. Secondary armament included two 7.62mm machine guns, a coaxial L8A1 and a cupola mounted L37A1.





The commander's and secondary hatches atop the Chieftain turret illustrate the narrow ingress and egress from the tank's interior



The semi-recumbent position of the driver within the Chieftain hull set a new standard for tanks that followed

**“THE DRIVER STEERED THE CHIEFTAIN WITH TILLERS, ACCELERATING VIA CABLE LOCATED AT HIS RIGHT FOOT, AND OPERATING THE TRANSMISSION IN A STYLE SIMILAR TO A MOTORCYCLE”**

## INTERIOR

The Chieftain's crew of four included a commander, driver, gunner and loader. Positioned in the centre of the hull and occupying a semi-reclining seat that reduced the tank's profile considerably, the driver steered the Chieftain with tillers, accelerating via cable located at his right foot, and operating the transmission in a style similar to a motorcycle, with a peg at his left foot that was kicked either up or down. The other three crewmen were stationed in the turret with the gunner to the right of the breech and the loader to the left. The commander sat behind the gunner.

## ARSENALEN & WORLD OF TANKS

SWEDEN'S TANK MUSEUM IS HOME TO A VAST COLLECTION OF ARMOURED VEHICLES

Located south-west of Stockholm near the sleepy town of Strängnäs, Arsenalen is host to a collection of more than 350 tracked and wheeled military vehicles from all over the world and throughout the last century. The museum's Chieftain Mk10, which you can see pictured on these pages, is just one of the many rare and fascinating vehicles on display.

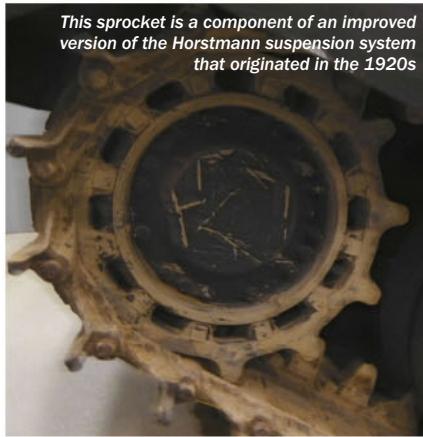
For those looking to get a more hands-on experience with these unique vehicles, the new Swedish Tech Tree from free online game *World Of Tanks* offers players the chance to fight in 21 light, medium and heavy tanks as well as destroyers.

For more information visit [arsenalen.se/en](http://arsenalen.se/en) and [worldoftanks.com](http://worldoftanks.com)



**WORLD OF TANKS**

**ROLL OUT**



This sprocket is a component of an improved version of the Horstmann suspension system that originated in the 1920s



The Soviets, who deployed their main T-62 and T-64 tanks against the Chieftain, believed it was a greater threat than the American Patton tanks

## DESIGN

When the Chieftain entered service with the British Army in 1966, it mounted the most powerful gun and the best composite armour in the world. The tank was the first to place the driver in the semi-reclining position, increasing the slope and effectiveness

of the armour protection, while the turret was designed without a mantlet, further minimising its silhouette. Up to 64 rounds of ammunition were stored separately from the bag charges, which were encased in 'wet storage', a mixture of water and glycol that minimised the potential for a catastrophic explosion if the interior were penetrated.

## SERVICE HISTORY

SINCE ITS INTRODUCTION 50 YEARS AGO, THE CHIEFTAIN HAS SERVED WITHIN THE BRITISH ARMY, AS WELL AS THOSE OF SEVERAL MIDDLE-EASTERN COUNTRIES

The Chieftain served as the primary frontline tank of the British Army for three decades. For much of that period it was considered the most formidable main battle tank in the world. By the time it was replaced by the Challenger series, more than a dozen variants had been produced, and the survivability of the crew had steadily improved with the introduction of the latest Chobham composite armour. The final production model, the Mk 5, included improvements to the engine and the Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical (NBC) protective system. A total of 2,083 Chieftains were produced, and the tank was withdrawn from frontline service with the British Army in 1995.

Early Chieftains mounted a 12.7mm (.50-calibre) machine gun for ranging the main weapon, however, this was replaced

by a 7.62mm defensive machine gun after laser range-finding was introduced in the 1970s. By 1980, targeting capabilities were enhanced with a computerised Marconi Improved Fire Control System (IFCS).

While several other NATO countries chose to purchase the German Leopard I main battle tank, the Centurion was widely exported to the Middle East, equipping the armies of Iran, Jordan, Oman, Kuwait and Iraq. The Chieftain saw extensive action during the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88, and its performance was unremarkable – primarily due to powerplant breakdowns. It participated in the largest tank battle of that conflict in 1981, with Iranian forces losing approximately 200 Chieftains and American-built M60A1s while the Iraqis lost 50 Soviet-made T-62s. After Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait in 1990, Chieftains of the Kuwaiti 35th Armoured Brigade fought the Iraqi Medina and Hammurabi Divisions, losing at least 130 tanks during the Battle of the Bridges and the subsequent withdrawal across the Saudi frontier. Steadily upgraded through much of its career, the Chieftain remains active with some armies today, its service life extending half a century.

**“IT WAS CONSIDERED THE MOST FORMIDABLE MAIN BATTLE TANK IN THE WORLD”**

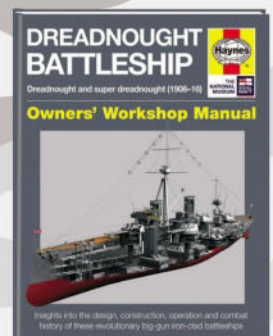
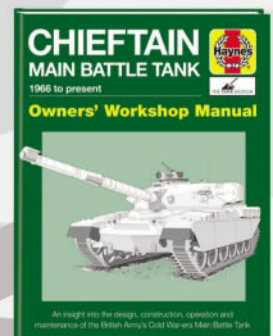
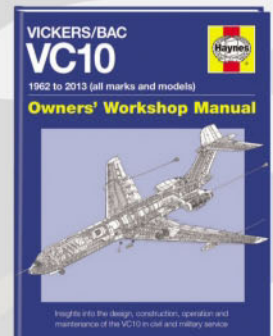
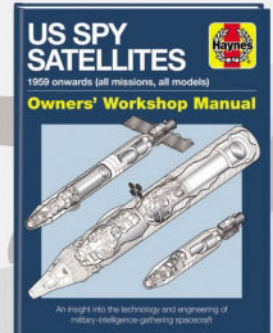


Chieftain tanks were used extensively in the Iran-Iraq war by the Iranians

Images: Alamy, Getty, Shutterstock



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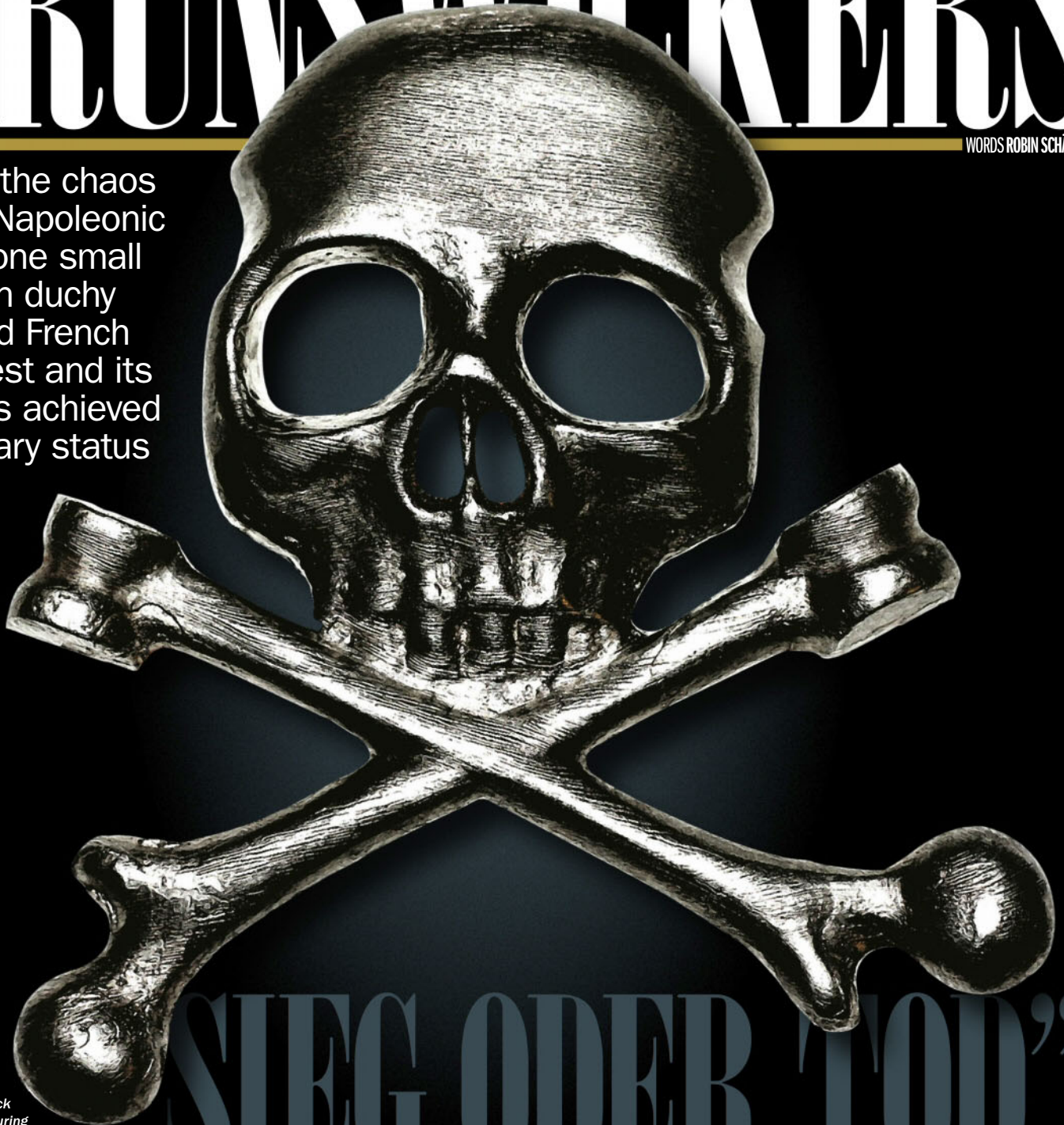


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# THE BLACK BRUNSWICKERS

WORDS ROBIN SCHÄFER

During the chaos of the Napoleonic Wars, one small German duchy resisted French conquest and its soldiers achieved legendary status



*The cap badge used by the Black Brunswickers during their 1815 campaign in the battles of Quatre Bras and Waterloo*

## SIEG ODER 'TOD'

**D**uring the War of the Fourth Coalition, on 14 October 1806 at the Battle of Jena-Auerstedt, the aging Charles William Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg – by then in Prussian service and in command of the Prussian main army – was severely wounded by a musket ball. His second in command had been wounded too and soon his army, suffering from an outdated and clumsy command system and using outdated tactics, was defeated by a French force only half its size. Having lost both eyeballs to the shot, the 71-year-old Duke was returned to Brunswick where, because three of his four sons were unfit to rule, he declared his youngest son Frederick William to be his successor.

The Duke then appealed to Napoleon Bonaparte himself, pleading mercy for his neutral country and asking for himself the right to die in peace. When these wishes were bluntly denied, he left Brunswick to seek refuge in neutral Denmark. After saying farewell to his wife, sister and eldest sons, he succumbed to his wounds on 10 November 1806.

On 26 October, a regiment of French cavalry had entered Brunswick, formally taking control

in the name of the French emperor by removing the old coat of arms from Brunswick Chateau. The house of Brunswick had ceased to exist, while its territory was incorporated into the Kingdom of Westphalia, ruled by Napoleon's brother Jérôme.

The young and dispossessed Duke Frederick William, who up until then had been serving with distinction as general major of the Prussian Army during the Battle of Jena and the Battle of Lübeck, withdrew to the Duchy of Oels in lower Silesia, which he had inherited in 1805. Having turned down an annual pension of 100,000 guilders, which had been offered to him by the King of Westphalia, he travelled to Austria in 1808, lending his services as an independent German lord and ally.

### Plotting revenge

In 1809, at the outbreak of the War of the Fifth Coalition, the dispossessed Duke of Brunswick, fuelled by his hunger for revenge against Napoleon and the desire to retake possession of his ancestral lands, seized the opportunity and offered to raise a corps of men to fight on Austria's side. It was to consist of two battalions of line infantry, a battalion of Jägers,

one company of sharpshooters and a mounted contingent of lancers and hussars.

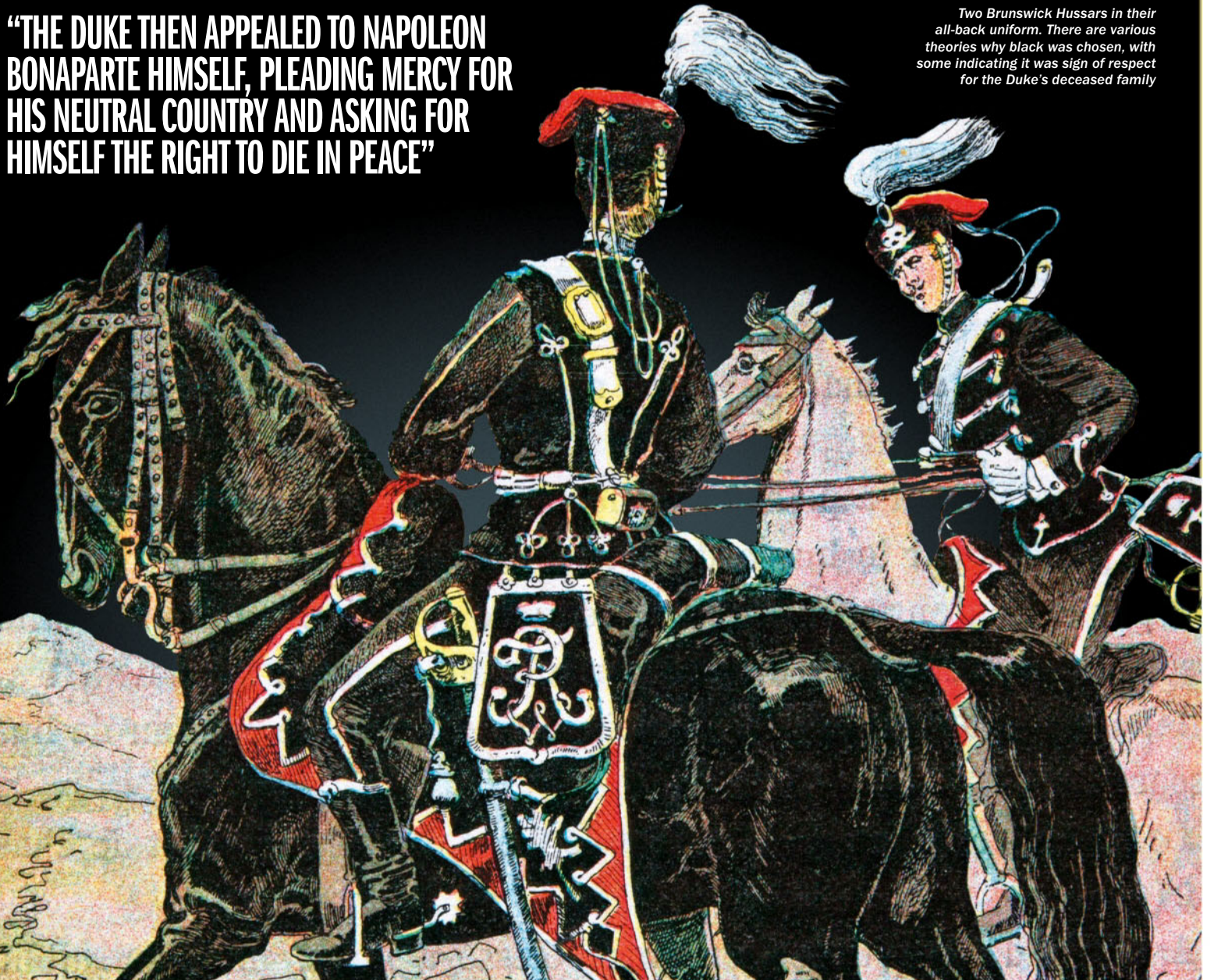
The headquarters of the new unit was based in the town of Nachod in north-east Bohemia and it didn't take long before the first men arrived to volunteer for service under the banner of the young duke. It is noteworthy that only a small fraction of these men were actually Brunswickers. Due to the close vicinity of the Prussian border and the fact that the Treaty of Tilsit had forcefully reduced the Prussian army to a maximum size of 42,000 men, most volunteers were discharged Prussian soldiers and officers. As Prussia had expressly forbidden its citizens to join any kind of German Freikorps, most had made the journey in secret. On 1 April 1809, the corps was raised officially. To finance it, Frederick William had pawned his estates in Oels to Prussia for the ripe sum of 2 million Talers.

### The march of 1809

In the spring 1809, Austria saw its chance to take revenge for its defeat at Austerlitz in 1805. The French were locked into a bloody conflict in Spain and in a number of German states, unrest and revolution was in the air.

**“THE DUKE THEN APPEALED TO NAPOLEON BONAPARTE HIMSELF, PLEADING MERCY FOR HIS NEUTRAL COUNTRY AND ASKING FOR HIMSELF THE RIGHT TO DIE IN PEACE”**

*Two Brunswick Hussars in their all-back uniform. There are various theories why black was chosen, with some indicating it was sign of respect for the Duke's deceased family*



On 10 April 1809, Austria attacked Bavaria and launched another offensive on the Duchy of Warsaw five days later – both states were allies of France. In the meantime, the Duke led his men into Saxony, hoping to stir the local population to rise against the French and join the war at the side of their fellow Germans. For a number of reasons this was largely unsuccessful, although he had managed to recruit further volunteers.

The Black Host, which now numbered about 1,400 men, was still in Saxony when the Duke learned that the Austrians had been defeated at the Battle of Wagram on 6 July 1809 and had signed an armistice with France at Znaim on 12 July. Frederick William now had to decide whether to surrender as well or to continue the fight on his own. He decided to do the latter and thus began the 'March of the Black Host' (Zug der schwarzen Schar). A legendary feat of soldiery, which caught the imagination not only of fellow Germans, but of the wider European public too.

On 24 July 1809, the Black Duke told his officers that he would never accept French rule over German territory without a fight, even if this would result in his demise, and that every

man not willing to stand with him would be free to leave. Knowing that their only realistic, yet highly improbable, hope of survival lay in the landing of a British army in northern Germany, 200 men and 27 officers left the unit.

On 27 July, the corps reached Halle, which up to 1807 had been a Prussian city but was now part of Westphalia. A cheering population welcomed the Black Duke and his men as liberators. On the evening of 29 July, Halberstadt was taken from a garrison of Westphalian troops in bloody house-to-house fighting. 1,500 Westphalian soldiers surrendered the following day, and 300 of them volunteered to join the Black Host.

The glorious manner in which the Duke's men were welcomed by the local population intensified even more when they reached the border of the old Duchy of Brunswick. On its march toward the former residential town of Wolfenbüttel, hundreds of cheering and singing civilians marched amidst the ranks of the black-clad soldiers. On the 13-kilometre march on Brunswick itself, the road was lined with thousands of cheering people. A noteworthy incident occurred when the Duke was invited to spend the night inside the ducal residence

of the city, which was his rightful property. He declined: "It may have been that once, but it has been stolen and now belongs to the King of Westphalia, under whose roof I do not intend to rest." He spent the night in camp among the ranks of his men.

At that point, the British force on the north sea coast numbered only about 800 men, so now the Duke's hope was to lead his men to the Weser estuary where there would be ships with which he hoped to be taken to England. Later that day, upon learning that a Westphalian and Dutch Division were on the way towards the city, the Duke decided to face the Westphalian Division in battle, in an attempt to force a breakthrough to the north. Destroying a number of vital bridges, the corps moved towards the village of Ölper to avoid being flanked.

The Black Host faced a far superior Westphalian force, which outnumbered them by more than two to one. In the pitched battle that followed, it soon became clear that all bravery could not outweigh the inferiority in numbers. It was only a matter of time until the Dutch force would enter the battle from the direction of Magdeburg – the fate of the Black Host appeared to be sealed. Yet after nightfall, the Duke received the news that the Westphalians had withdrawn and that the way north was clear. Why the Westphalian General Reubel had decided to pull his troops back has never been completely explained.

In forced marches of more than 48 kilometres per day, the Black Host continued

### **"ON 24 JULY 1809, THE BLACK DUKE TOLD HIS OFFICERS THAT HE WOULD NEVER ACCEPT FRENCH RULE OVER GERMAN TERRITORY WITHOUT A FIGHT"**

*Brunswick infantry in action at Quatre Bras where they helped thwart Marshall Ney's attempt to drive a wedge between the allied armies*



# BRUNSWICKER INFANTRY

GERMAN INFANTRY FOUGHT WITH ALL THE TRAPPINGS OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS

## CANTEEN

The wooden canteen was first introduced in 1793. Trotter & Sons, the main manufacturer, had made 200,000 of them by 1803. Yet canteens were not standardised equipment, and a number of other types made from wood and tin were available to British troops throughout the Napoleonic Wars. The Brunswicker's canteen is marked BLJ for Braunschweig Lauenburg'sche Jäger.

**"THE BRUNSWICKER'S  
CANTEEN IS MARKED BLJ  
FOR BRAUNSCHWEIG  
LAUENBURG'SCHE JÄGER"**

## BAYONET

The Brown Bess Bayonet was the standard infantry bayonet issued from 1722 to around 1840 for use with the musket of the same name. It was made with a socket that fitted over the barrel of the musket and had a slot that slid past the fore sight. Later, bayonets would have a locking catch. The blade was offset to one side allowing the soldier to load the musket without injuring himself.



## SHAKO

The shako became popular from about 1800 and was worn by the majority of regiments in the armies of the day. Made of hardened leather and thick felt, it retained its shape and offered some protection for the head, while its visor shaded the wearer's eyes from the sun. The Austrian-style shako displays the skull and crossbones insignia of the Black Host infantry.

## BROWN BESS MUSKET

This musket became the standard issue of the British Army in 1797 and was issued to the Black Brunswickers after their arrival in England in 1809. Throughout the Napoleonic Wars, nearly 3 million guns of this type were manufactured and distributed. The only change in their manufacture during this period was the switch from a swan-necked cock to a reinforced style in 1809. Due to the numbers manufactured, this pattern saw use as late as 1850 throughout the British army and militia.



*Above: The Brown Bess used a flintlock mechanism that made it somewhat unreliable in adverse weather conditions*

heading north. They were closely pursued by the enemy on the way but still managed to continue picking up volunteers as they went. On 3 August, the Host reached Hannover where the garrison surrendered without a fight. The River Weser was crossed two days later, after which the border into the Duchy of Oldenburg was crossed. There the local regent, Peter Frederick von Oldenburg, whose lands had come under French rule after the Confederation of the Rhine was formed, had already received news of the Black Duke's arrival – as well as orders to stop him at all costs. Yet, being related to the House of Brunswick, von Oldenburg made sure that his soldiers always were deployed where the Black Host was not.

To keep up appearances, a small unit of Oldenburg cavalry confronted the Duke's force only to surrender before a shot was fired. Now being prisoners, Oldenburg Dragoons served the Duke as valuable guides through foreign territory. Always evading the enemy, and after a number of skirmishes, the Black Host reached Elsfleth on 6 August 1809. In the course of the next two days, all naval vessels anchoring there were requisitioned. Finally, the Black Host sailed out of the Weser estuary accompanied by the cheers of hundreds of people lining the dykes and under sporadic fire of Danish field artillery. On 9 August, the corps reached Heligoland from where it was taken to England on British troop transports.

The King of Westphalia, Jérôme Bonaparte, fell into a rage when he learned that Frederick William had been able to escape. Furious with General Reubel, he immediately ordered him to be replaced. Yet by then General Reubel had already vanished, having quietly boarded a ship that had taken him to America.

It was this 482-kilometre march through enemy-held territory that would form the basis of the Black Host's legendary reputation – but the war had only just started.

### The Brunswick-oels Jägers

After arriving in England, the British parliament granted Frederick William an annual pension of 7,000 pounds Sterling and in the following months, the Black Host went through a period of training and reorganisation. Not being able to recruit locally anymore, the ranks of the Host were filled with German soldiers from prisoner camps in England and by foreign mercenaries and volunteers that trickled in not just from Germany but also from Poland, Switzerland, Holland and Serbia. This boost of numbers watered down the discipline and morale of a force that had so far consisted of patriotic German volunteers. The men were issued with British

Right: The Battle of Quatre Bras was fought over a strategic crossroads that both sides desired to control

## “THE BRUNSWICKERS WERE PLACED UNDER COMMAND OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON AND FOUGHT IN BRITISH SERVICE IN PORTUGAL, SPAIN AND SOUTHERN FRANCE”

pattern muskets and rifles, sabres, ammunition pouches and backpacks.

The main uniform colour of the Blacks was retained and only some minor details of cut and style were altered. They were then formed into two regiments, one of infantry and one of cavalry and taken into English service under the name of The Duke of Brunswick-Oels Infantry and Cavalry, or more colloquially The Brunswick-Oels Jägers. After spending some time on the island of Guernsey and in Ireland, they finally shipped to Lisbon on 10 August 1810. Having reached Portugal, the Brunswickers were placed under command of the Duke of Wellington and fought in British service in Portugal, Spain and southern France.

Elements of the Brunswick Hussars fought in Sicily and only returned from there in 1816. During the campaign, the Brunswick infantry did not serve as a coherent force. Companies were split up and subordinated to a number of British divisions with the majority serving in General Lowrey Cole's 4th Division. The regiment fought with distinction during the battle of Fuentes de Oñoro, the Siege of Badajoz and in the battles of Salamanca and Vittoria in the Pyrenees and in southern France at Nivelles and the Nive.

### A new army

On 10 November 1814, the Brunswick-Oels Jägers left English service. While most mercenaries and foreigners left the unit, the core of the surviving, original men of the Black Host returned home to Brunswick. Napoleon's catastrophic defeat in Russia followed by the Prusso-Russian advance across northern Germany in 1813 had allowed the Duke to reclaim his lands and titles and he

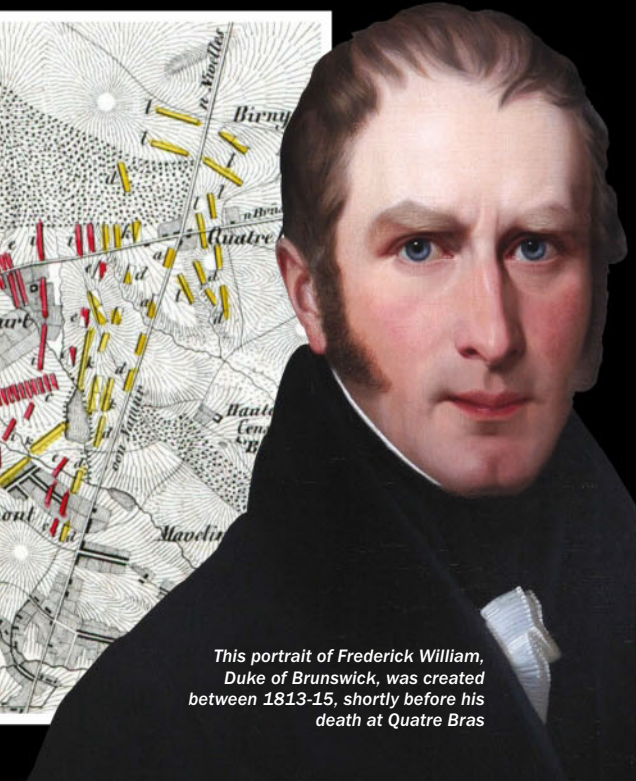
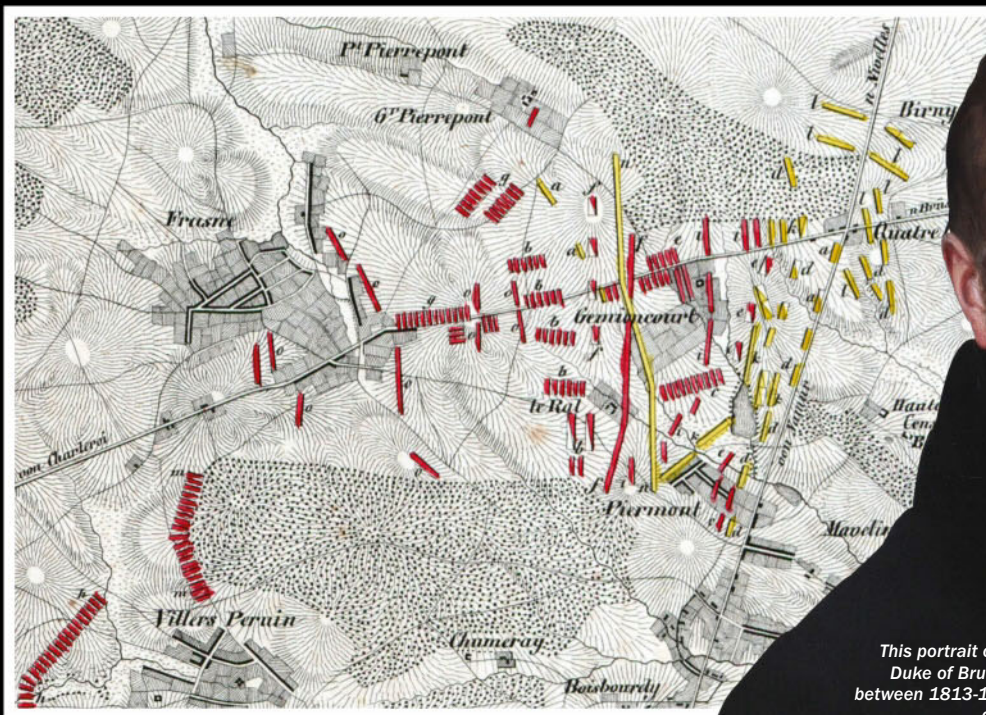
immediately set out to raise a new army to defend his ancestral homeland. His Peninsula veterans formed the nucleus of a new battalion numbering 672 men, which was designated Leibbataillon, the Life Battalion, on 14 April 1815. By then, the army of Brunswick consisted of a light infantry brigade, one line and one reserve infantry brigade, a regiment of hussars, a battery of foot and a battery of horse artillery.

On 26 February 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte staged his legendary escape from exile on the island of Elba. Landing on the French coast with a miniature army consisting of 600 guardsmen, he quickly advanced on Paris, swelling the ranks of his force with an endless stream of old soldiers and French regular troops who joyfully returned to serve under their former emperor. On 19 March, the Bourbons left Paris and fled for Belgium and by the following day, Napoleon was back in power. Only two months later, he had an army of 280,000 men at his disposal with the same number expected to join within eight weeks. War had returned to Europe, and the allied armies of Britain, Prussia, Austria and Russia with their host of minor allied states, were once again mobilised and set into motion to face the French.

On 15 April 1815, the Black Duke mobilised his force, which arrived in its positions near Brussels on 11 May.

### Quatre-Bras and Waterloo – victory or death

Even though he had a formidable army at his disposal, Napoleon was faced with a strategic dilemma. In total, the allied armies numbered more than 1 million men – if he'd allow these armies to gather and link up, they would surely



This portrait of Frederick William, Duke of Brunswick, was created between 1813-15, shortly before his death at Quatre Bras



# THE BLACK PARADE

A DYNASTIC TRAGEDY LIES AT THE HEART OF THIS TRULY IMPRESSIVE BUT INDELIBLY MACABRE UNIFORM

Due to their mostly black uniforms – only the sharpshooters and lancers wore green, black being the colour of death and revenge – the Duke's Freikorps (Free Corps) (whose motto and battle cry was "Sieg oder Tod" meaning death or victory), was colloquially known as "Schar der Rache" (Host of Revenge), "Schwarze Legion" (Black Legion), "Die schwarzen Krähen" (The Black Crows), "Die Schwarzen" (The Blacks) or most commonly, "Die schwarze Schar" (The Black Host).

The colour had been chosen to mourn for the French occupied homeland, the death of the old Duke and that of the young Duke's wife, Princess Marie of Baden, who had died during childbirth in 1808.

To complete this sinister look, the Freikorp's line infantry and hussars wore a shako that displayed the symbol of a human skull, similar to the one worn by the Prussian Black Hussars. In 1652, one of Frederick's ancestors had founded the Knightly Order of the Skull and both may have inspired the young Duke to choose this symbol for his unit.

Life as a soldier of the Black Host was generally a bit better as in other armies of the period, pay was good and even the rank and file was treated with a certain kind of respect. There was no flogging and officers addressed the rank and file with formal German 'Sie'.

**"TO COMPLETE THIS SINISTER LOOK, THE FREIKORP'S LINE INFANTRY AND HUSSARS WORE A SHAKO THAT DISPLAYED THE SYMBOL OF A HUMAN SKULL"**



Left: The parade uniform of a lieutenant of the 17th hussar regiment, complete with bearskin cap and skull badge, c.1890s

Bottom, left: The sharpshooters of the Black Brunswickers wore dark green jackets instead of the usual black



The exploits of the Black Brunswickers captured the imagination of the European population as seen in John Everett Millais's painting 'The Black Brunswicker'

overwhelm him. The only alternative was to strike a preventive blow on the enemy while he was still forming up. By preventing the allied armies from joining forces he could defeat the contingents one by one, forcing the Prussians back across the Rhine and then turning against the British and their German, Belgian and Dutch allies, forcing the former to evacuate its forces from the continent.

On 16 June 1815, a French army under command of Napoleon himself faced a Prussian force commanded by the venerable Field Marshal Blücher. Meanwhile, at the small hamlet of Quatre-Bras, a French Army Corps under command of Marshal Ney engaged an advancing allied army commanded by the Duke of Wellington. The day would see two major battles whose outcome would be decisive for the course of the battle fought at Waterloo two days later. The strategically important crossroads at Quatre-Bras needed to be held to allow Wellington's force to link up with the Prussian Army at Ligny. At the morning of the same day, Wellington had given his promise to Blücher that he would rush to his support if he was not attacked himself. Yet this was exactly what happened, as Napoleon had ordered a French Corps under Marshal Ney to secure his left flank and to take the crossroads at Quatre Bras.

In the evening, a pitched and costly battle developed in which troops from Britain, Hanover, Brunswick and Nassau fought an initially superior French force, which had to leave the field by the end of the day. Even though Wellington had been left in possession of the field, Quatre-Bras had been a tactical draw – yet this result would be decisive.

By denying Wellington to rush to the aid Blücher, Napoleon had been able to defeat the Prussians at Ligny, yet he failed to destroy them completely, mainly because he could not make use of the corps tied up in battle at Quatre-Bras. This in turn allowed Blücher to lead his army to the aid of the arguably beaten Wellington two days later. The battle of Quatre-Bras had paved the road to victory at Waterloo. A total of about 8,800 men had been killed, yet it was the Brunswick contingent that suffered the worst blow at about 5pm. Corporal Ernst Kübel serving in the 2nd company of the Life Battalion later wrote:

"The French cavalry now turned to attack us and it can not have been further away than 50 paces. In the same moment, our serene highness the Duke, coming from the direction of our hussars and lancers, without anyone to accompany him, rode in from the half-right, right between us and the French cavalry, which in the same moment opened fire by platoons.

The horse of his serene highness reared and did not want to go on any further, and in the same moment a second salvo was fired, from which our most serene Duke received his wound. One ball had, as it later turned out, grazed his right wrist then pierced his chest on the right before exiting at his left shoulder. This way our most beloved lord fell to the ground on the right side of his horse. He was lying right between the French and our side, about 25 paces away.

[So] as not to leave our valued lord to the advancing enemy, I talked two of my comrades, Bugler Auer and Jäger Reckau, to make the

## "QUATRE-BRAS HAD BEEN A TACTICAL DRAW – YET THIS RESULT WOULD BE DECISIVE"

dangerous attempt to take him back to our side. Determined, we jumped forward picking him up as carefully as the situation allowed it before quickly carrying him back using our rifles as a stretcher."

The mortally wounded Duke was carried back to a group of houses near the road towards Brussels where he succumbed to his injury shortly afterwards. The Black Duke was no more, and his adjutant, Colonel Elias Olfemann, immediately assumed command of the Corps. In total, the Black Brunswickers had lost 188 men killed and 396 wounded.

On Sunday 18 June, the Duke Wellington, aiming to block the French advance towards Brussels, had deployed his forces along a ridge of Mont Saint Jean near the village of Waterloo. Deployed as part of the Duke's reserve corps, the Brunswickers were positioned in relative safety behind the crest of the ridge, which in turn saved them from the severe casualties inflicted by the French bombardment that was to be the prelude to the battle. Later, the corps moved into the furthestmost line, taking the place of the British Foot Guards, which had been sent to reinforce the defenders of Chateau d'Hougoumont. There they faced the combined charge of the French cavalry that Marshall Ney launched against the Allied lines.

Formed into squares, the Allied infantry, the Black Brunswickers among them, resisted repeated attacks from more than 9,000 French horsemen. The squares remained unbroken, while at the same time the Brunswick Hussars, as part of the 7th British Cavalry Brigade, counter-charged and harried the French cavalry where the opportunity offered itself.

When later that day the French took the fortified farmhouse of La Haye Sainte, it left a dangerous cleft in the allied line. The Brunswick infantry was moved forward to fill it, yet this happened to be one the spots where Napoleon aimed an assault of his cherished Imperial Guard, with the aim of smashing through the weakened and exhausted Allied infantry. When the legendary and battle-hardened Grenadiers of the French Middle Guard advanced on the mostly raw and inexperienced Brunswickers, they broke and fell back towards the allied cavalry reserve.

Once the French Guards had been halted and finally thrown back, the Brunswickers had sufficiently rallied to participate in the general advance of the Allied army and finally brought victory. At the end of the day, 154 soldiers of the Black Host had been killed, 456 wounded and another 50 were missing.

The Battle of Waterloo ended Napoleon's reign of the 'Hundred Days' and heralded the end of the French First Empire. It is tragic that Frederick William, the Black Duke, who had spent his whole life fighting Napoleon Bonaparte, was not there to witness the ultimate downfall of the French emperor in a battle that would become a defining moment in not just the history of Brunswick, but the of the whole of Europe too.

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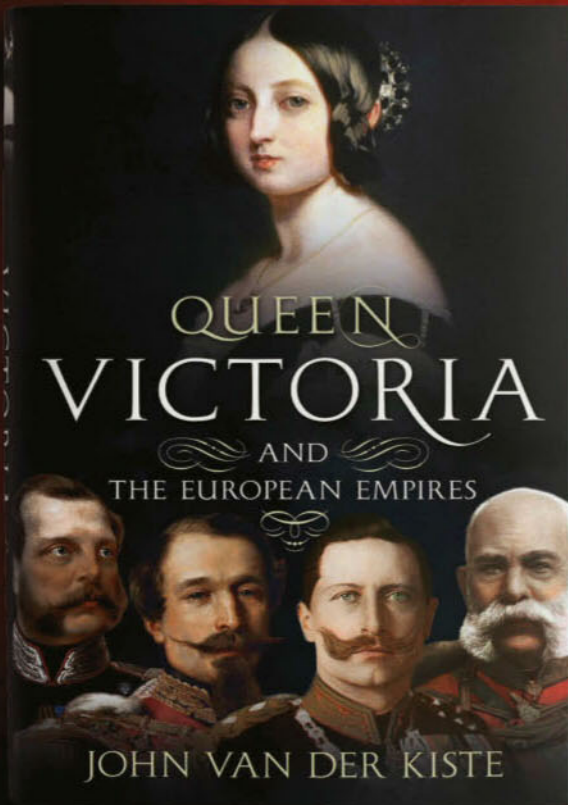
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# REVIEWS

Our pick of the newest military history titles waiting for you on the shelves

# SCRAMBLE!

**“HE IS ARGUABLY PARTIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR EPI TOMISING THE SPIRIT OF THE YOUNG, DASHING FIGHTER PILOT THAT HAS SINCE BECOME LEGENDARY”**

**Writer:** Tom Neil (Introduction by James Holland) **Publisher:** Amberley Press  
**Price:** £16.99 (Paperback) **Released:** 15 October 2016

ONE OF THE LAST SURVIVING RAF PILOTS FROM THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN SHARES HIS EXPERIENCES OF A CRUCIAL MOMENT IN WESTERN HISTORY

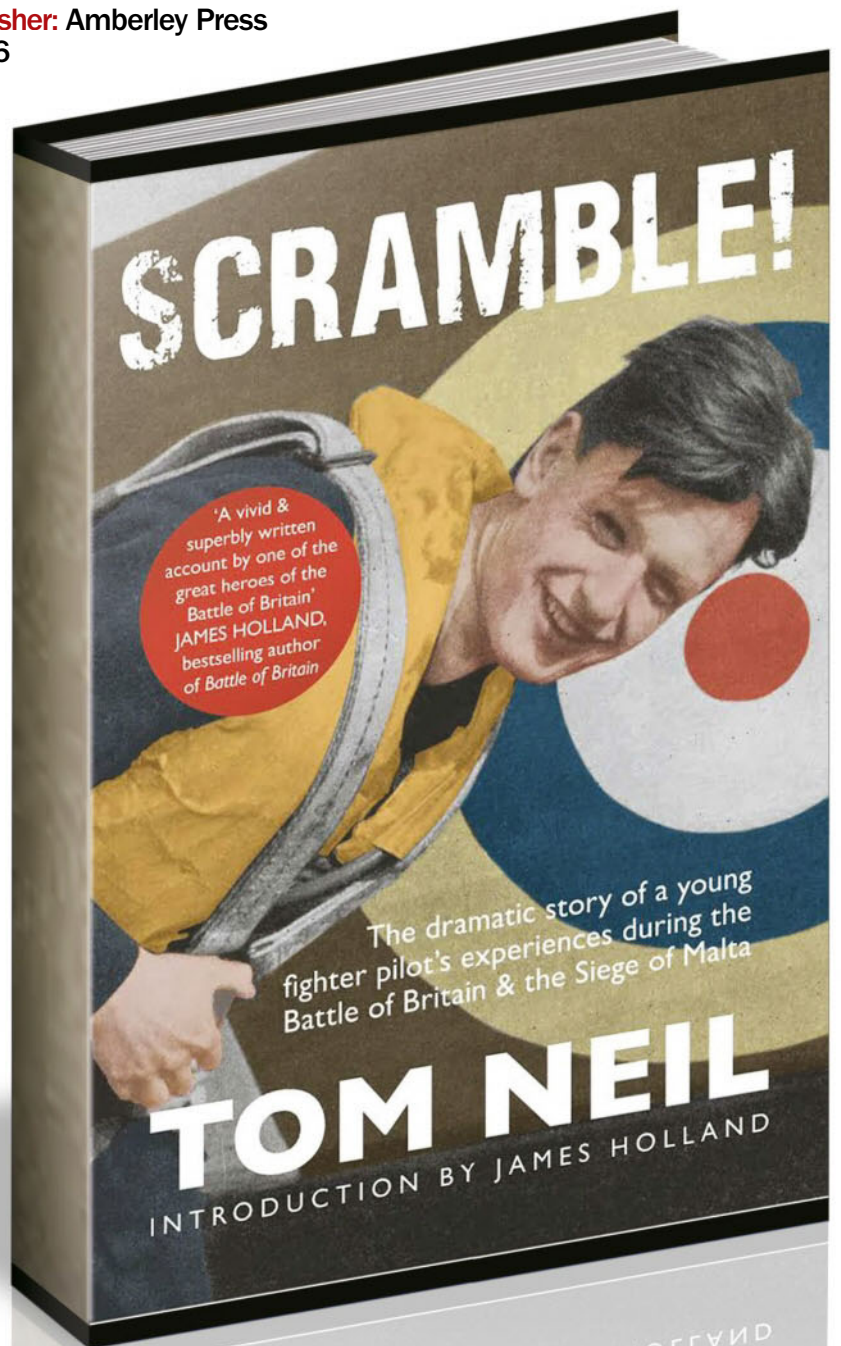
Along with Wing Commander Paul Farnes, Wing Commander Tom Neil is only one of two surviving ‘ace’ fighter pilots from the Battle of Britain. Aged 96 as of January 2017, Neil flew Hawker Hurricanes with 249 Squadron during the Battle of Britain as a pilot officer, where he flew 141 combat missions, destroyed 13 enemy aircraft and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Bar by the end of 1940. By the time WWII was over, he had scored a total of 14 kills and he has now written a vivid memoir detailing his wartime experiences.

The book is a tale of what it was like to be a fighter pilot between the tumultuous years of 1938-42, when Neil trained and then fought in the Battle of Britain and the Siege of Malta. He was barely out of training when he flew to defend his country from invasion and like many of his contemporaries, saw many of his friends injured and killed.

Neil had a unique experience during the Battle of Britain as he was one of the pilots used by the War Ministry for propaganda purposes. He is arguably partially responsible for epitomising the spirit of the young, dashing fighter pilot that has since become legendary.

With a touching introduction by the historian James Holland, *Scramble!* is a remarkably vivid work and benefits greatly from being written over a long number of years. Consequently, Neil has produced a work that is high in detail and stylistically entertaining. His fighting wartime career reads like a high adventure story but he never loses sight of the human cost involved. As Neil himself poignantly remarks, “the few” survivors from the Battle of Britain are dwindling rapidly but at more than 600 pages, he has produced (in his mid-nineties) a definitive history of his war for the 21st century, to remind us how much of our freedom we owe to a small band of brave young airmen.

*Left: Tom Neil in his RAF uniform c.1940. Like many RAF pilots during the battle, Tom was just entering his 20s*



# THE HOLOCAUST

Writer: Laurence Rees Publisher: Viking Price: £25 Released: Out now

## PLACING THE FINAL SOLUTION AT THE HEART OF THE THIRD REICH

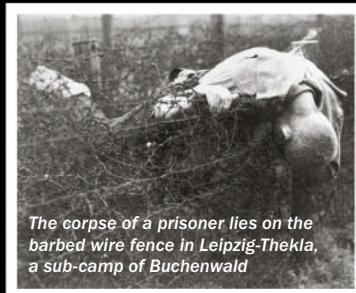
"Today I will once more be a prophet: If the international Jewish financiers in and outside Europe should succeed in plunging the nations once more into a world war, then the result will not be the Bolshevisation of the earth, and thus the victory of Jewry, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe." So spoke Hitler at the beginning of 1939, but there was nothing mystical about his insight. This was a self-fulfilling prophecy and that's the conclusion at the heart of this powerful new volume from Rees, the broadcaster and historian responsible for the BBC's *Auschwitz: The Nazis And 'The Final Solution'* and *The Nazis: A Warning From History*.

Rather than framing the mass murder of Europe's Jews as an uncontrollable consequence of Germany's desperate position toward the end of World War II, Rees demonstrates that for Hitler and his acolytes, war was fundamentally linked to genocide. Victory against the Bolsheviks, in their eyes, could only be accomplished by victory against their 'agents' and 'masters': Jews. This vicious irrationality at the heart of the Nazi world view explains the rationalisation behind the vast reserves of wartime manpower and resources being channelled into a network of repression, as well as the incomparable barbarism and cruelty with which this 'enemy' – defenceless men, women and children – were being pursued. It's a line of doublethink that exposes the lie of 'anti-partisan warfare' when 'partisans' weren't just resistance fighters or Red Army remnants but Jewish communities, twisted into mendacious fifth columnists by propaganda. It explains why the infamous 'Commissar Order' was interpreted by some as not just demanding the summary execution of Soviet political officers – the enforcers of Communist ideology – but also Jews in the Red Army, held every bit as culpable.

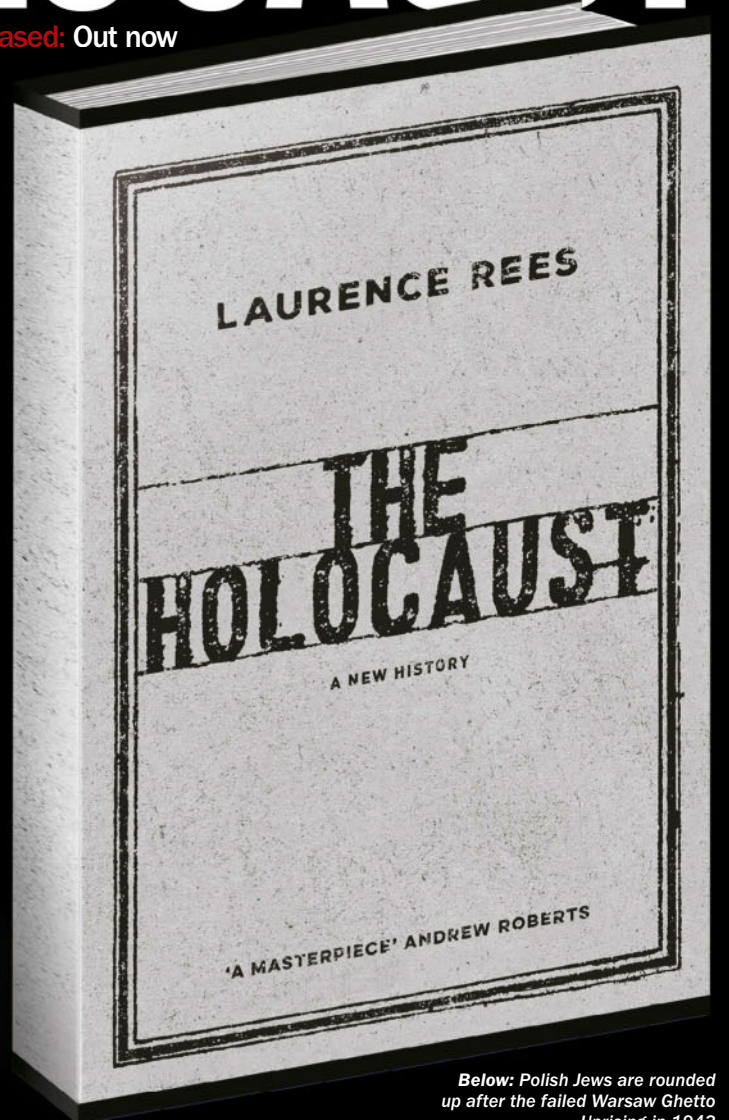
With the eye of a seasoned documentarian, Rees moves confidently through events and primary sources – many of which are seeing print for the first time – but refuses to become lost in them, surrender to hyperbole or overwork his conclusions. His assured treatment as much as his thoroughness of research is part of what makes this an essential and accessible study of the subject.

For military historians especially *The Holocaust* is a potent reminder of the limits imposed on any abstract appreciation of men, tactics or machines, as well as the enduring myth of the 'clean Wehrmacht'. Irrespective of the personal guilt or belief of the average soldier, the speech quoted above was made to the Reichstag: it was no secret. It was the rallying cry of a nation marching toward war – a war they knew would end with "the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe."

**"WITH THE EYE OF A SEASONED DOCUMENTARIAN, REES MOVES CONFIDENTLY THROUGH EVENTS AND PRIMARY SOURCES, MANY OF WHICH ARE SEEING PRINT FOR THE FIRST TIME"**



The corpse of a prisoner lies on the barbed wire fence in Leipzig-Thekla, a sub-camp of Buchenwald



Below: Polish Jews are rounded up after the failed Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943



# THE GREAT WAR AND THE MIDDLE EAST

**Author:** Rob Johnson **Publisher:** Oxford University Press **Price:** £25 **Released:** Out now

## TURNING AN EYE TO EASTERN EUROPE'S SOMEWHAT NEGLECTED ROLE IN WWI

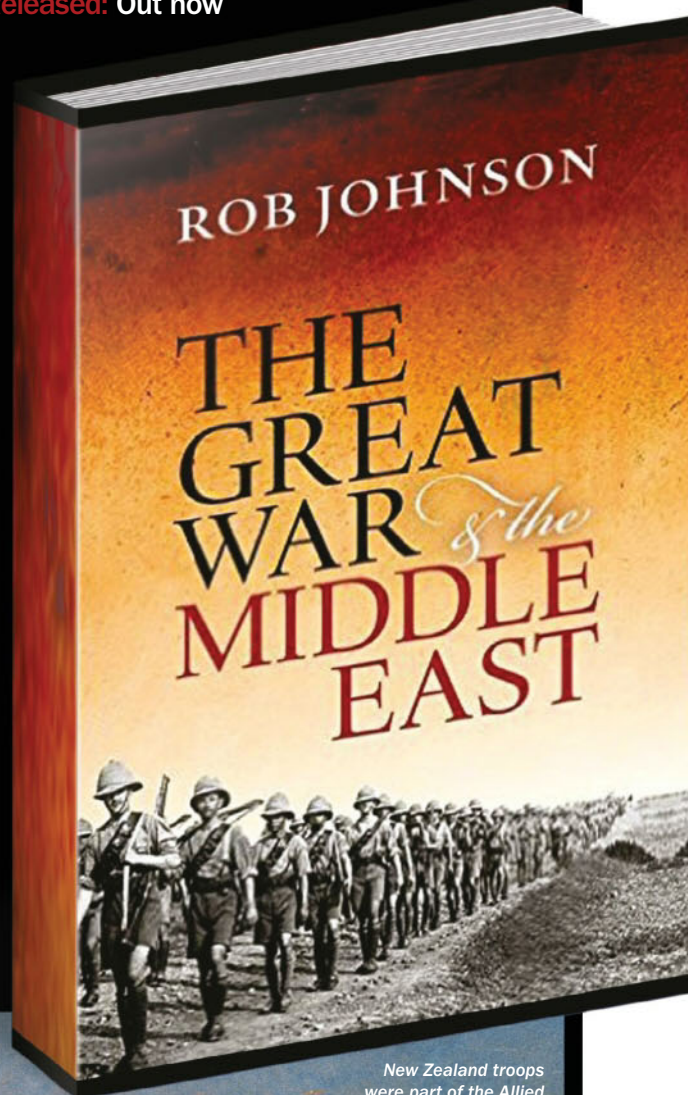
One of the most important things to come out of the centenary of 1914 is the general consensus that World War I has been treated as a primarily Western European affair for too long. Excellent publications have demonstrated how the conflict played out on previously neglected fronts, including Eastern Europe or indeed the Middle East. The latest scholarly account of the latter theatre of war is Rob Johnson's book *The Great War And The Middle East*.

Drawing on intensive research in various archives, Johnson's thorough account highlights the strategic importance of the fighting in the Middle East. The Ottoman territories became a central stage for an imperial conflict of survival (in the Ottoman case) and expansion (in the case of Britain and France). Johnson's history of the war in the Middle East also highlights the centrality of local actors who have long been reduced to the role of useful puppets instrumentalised by London and Paris. He corrects this misconception by reconstructing their own agency and interests, thus helping to explain the various tensions and frequent outbursts of violence that have characterised the region from 1918-19 until the present day.

At the heart of Johnson's primarily operational history of the war are the strategies of different combatant states that fought in the region, their effectiveness or short-comings and their long-term results. His central argument is that the Allied victory was not achieved by a readily made blueprint strategy available in 1914, but by a series of pragmatic choices that were often made against the backdrop of setbacks such as the Ottoman victory at Gallipoli or the fall of Kut.

Proceeding chronologically, Johnson discusses all major operations in the Middle East, from the defence of Suez in 1914 through the amphibious landing on the Gallipoli peninsula and the Allied withdrawal, the Arab Revolt and the Mesopotamian campaigns. Cumulatively, it is less a history of important battles than an astute analysis of political and military strategies employed in this theatre of war. This treatment is rounded off by an insightful account of the Paris Peace Treaties and the various ways in which they impacted on the Successor States in the Middle East and the various League of Nations's mandates. The result is a very readable history of strategy that will be welcomed by many specialists and non-specialists alike.

**“THE ALLIED VICTORY WAS NOT ACHIEVED BY A READILY MADE BLUEPRINT STRATEGY AVAILABLE IN 1914”**



New Zealand troops were part of the Allied invasion force that landed at what soon became known as Anzac Cove



# AN AMERICAN ON THE WESTERN FRONT

THE FIRST WORLD WAR LETTERS OF ARTHUR CLIFFORD KIMBER, 1917-1918

**Authors:** Patrick Gregory and Elizabeth Nurser **Publisher:** The History Press  
**Price:** £20 **Released:** Out now

FIRST-HAND GLANCE INTO THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF ONE OF THE FIRST US SOLDIERS ON THE WESTERN FRONT

History books on the, brief but costly, US involvement in World War I have become more numerous in the lead-up to 2017, which marks the 100th anniversary of the United States's entry into the war.

*An American On The Western Front* is a recent example of this general trend. At its heart is the story of one US soldier, Arthur Clifford Kimber, who left Stanford in order to serve in Europe. One of the first US soldiers to reach the Western front, Kimber wrote some 160 letters to his mother, which paint a vivid picture of the mobilisation process, the passage to Europe and everyday life on the front in the final year of the war. Yet the book also attempts to offer a more general account of US involvement in the conflict.

It is a great book for those interested in what Kimber – author Elizabeth Nurser's uncle and an aviator on the Western Front – did in World War I,

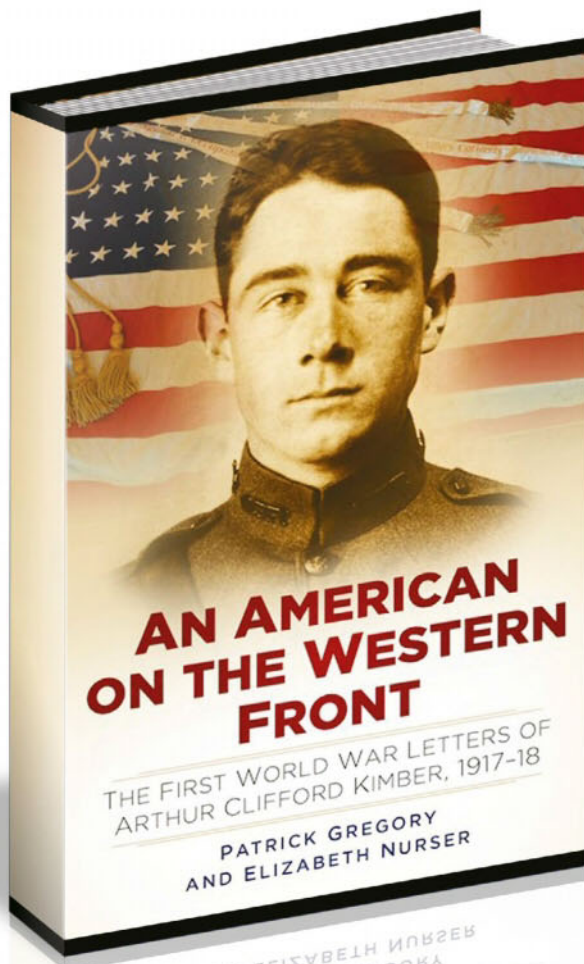
and it adds a much needed human perspective to 'classic' military histories in which humans are either altogether absent or appear only in the form of generals, while those actually doing the fighting remain faceless. In his letters, Kimber tells his mother about other young Americans who had enthusiastically volunteered in the spring of 1917. On his journey to England, he reflects on the dangers of crossing the Atlantic and on the sinking of the *Lusitania*, a story described to him by a steward who had survived. In France, he takes photographs of everyday life on the front and continues his letter-writing until the day before he is killed in action a few weeks before the war ended.

All of this is very interesting and offers a moving account of the war through the eyes of a young soldier who fought and died in the Great War. The book certainly deserves to be read by all who wish to know more about this personal perspective on the conflict. However, for those who are looking for a reliable guide to understand the US involvement in the war in all its complexities, I can think of better (and somewhat more scholarly) publications such as *The Path To War: How The First World War Created Modern America* by Michael Neiberg, arguably the pre-eminent scholar currently working on America's involvement in World War I, or Jennifer Keene's *The United States And The First World War*.



American troops during the Champagne-Marne offensive

**“THE BOOK CERTAINLY DESERVES TO BE READ BY ALL WHO WISH TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONFLICT”**



## ALL ABOUT HISTORY RECOMMENDS...



**DENIAL**  
HISTORY IS ON TRIAL IN THIS RIVETING COURTROOM DRAMA  
**CERTIFICATE:** 12A  
**DIRECTOR:** MICK JACKSON  
**CAST:** RACHEL WEISZ, TIMOTHY SPALL, TOM WILKINSON, MARK GATISS  
**RELEASED:** OUT NOW

“Not all opinions are equal,” declares American academic and historian Deborah Lipstadt (Rachel Weisz), to the British press after her victorious day in court. It's a line that bears repeating and clinging to in today's 'post-truth' world, where poorly argued internet memes appear to carry as much as veracity as expertise and genuine facts. It's also meant as a stinging rebuke to the likes of David Irving, a historical writer who spent much of his time attacking the Holocaust and denying Hitler had any knowledge of it. Benefitting from an excellent script by David Hare, *Denial* is brilliant. Timothy Spall's portrayal of Irving opts not for a pantomime-style, reptilian, fascist apologist, but for a more nuanced character study.

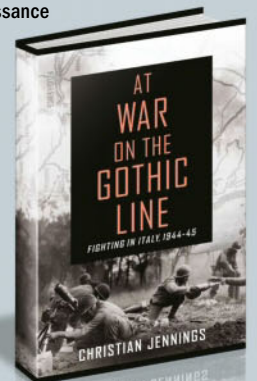
**AT WAR ON THE GOTHIC LINE: FIGHTING IN ITALY 1944-45**  
THE CRIMINALLY OVERLOOKED CAMPAIGN GETS A THRILLING RETELLING  
**AUTHOR:** CHRISTIAN JENNINGS  
**PUBLISHER:** OSPREY **PRICE:** £20

The Italian peninsula is slender and mountainous. Tactically this makes it difficult for any invader to conquer, leaving the defender able to dominate the high ground and hard to outflank. Italy's unique geography was one of the reasons the Roman Empire dominated for almost 1,500 years. So when Allied troops jumped from landing crafts onto Italy's southern shores in September 1943, they entered into a grinding war of attrition that would see them trapped in the peninsula until the end of the conflict. Sure, Rome fell on 5 June 1944 – by which time Italy's fascist dictatorship had collapsed – but the fighting was far from over. Mussolini's diehard supporters joined forces with elite German troops including SS divisions and paratroopers to halt the Allied advance, and for the next ten months held a force of 15 different nations in check on what became known as the Gothic Line.

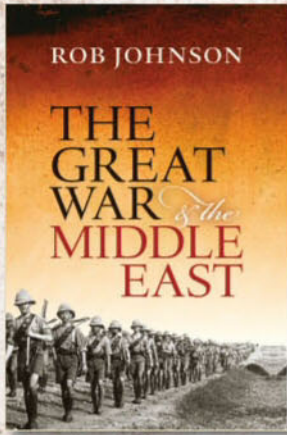
It is this hugely neglected aspect of World War II under examination in Christian Jennings's highly readable book *At War On The Gothic Line*. The author weaves together these events using first-hand accounts of 13 men and women who fought on both sides.

While Jennings doesn't quite nail the epic sweep this narrative demands, he has found some fascinating characters to grace his grand stage. These include a young Japanese-American officer from Pearl Harbor who loses an arm attacking a machine-gun nest (and who – due to discrimination – is only decorated for doing so 56 years later); an African-American clerk in a segregated division who finds himself taking on the 'supermen' of Hitler's SS; an Indian officer from Mumbai who leads a mission to save Renaissance artworks; and a female teenage Italian partisan who helps blow up a crucial railway bridge.

Dismissed as D-Day dodgers by some, the men and women who struggled to overcome fascism in southern Europe in the last years of the war fought as hard as anyone. This engrossing book does a fine job of painting them back into history.



# MILITARY HISTORY FROM OXFORD

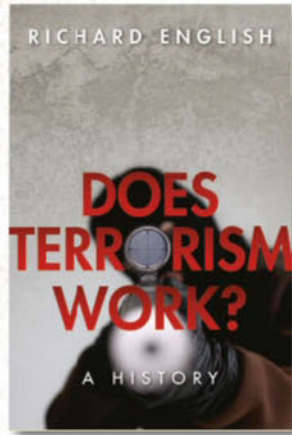


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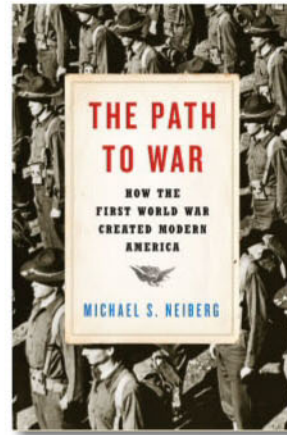


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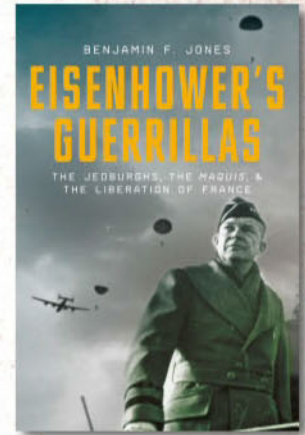


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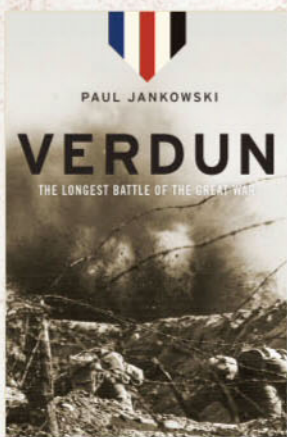


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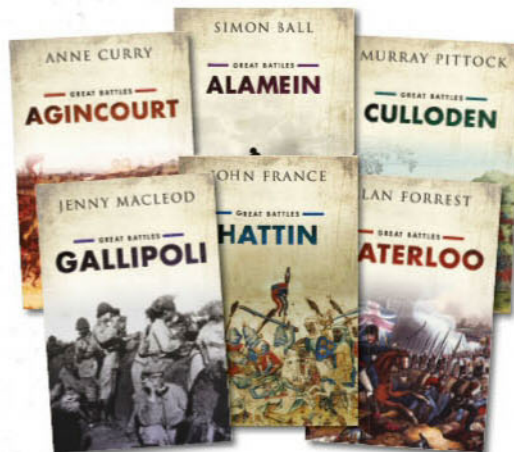
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#### Printing & Distribution

Wyndeham Peterborough, Storey's Bar Road, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, PE1 5YS

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Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU  
☎ 0203 787 9060 [www.marketforce.co.uk](http://www.marketforce.co.uk)

**Distributed in Australia by** Gordon & Gotch Australia Pty Ltd,  
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ISSN 2054-376X



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17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

# BULLET EXTRACTOR

© National Civil War Centre

This surgical tool from the 1640s was an innovative, if grisly, sign of medical advancements during a violent period in English history

**S**urgery in warfare is always a painful business, but until relatively modern times it was positively horrific. Until the 19th century, soldiers were treated without anaesthetic and during the British Civil Wars of the mid-17th century, wounded men were subjected to bone saws, skull elevators and sometimes this ominous bullet extractor.

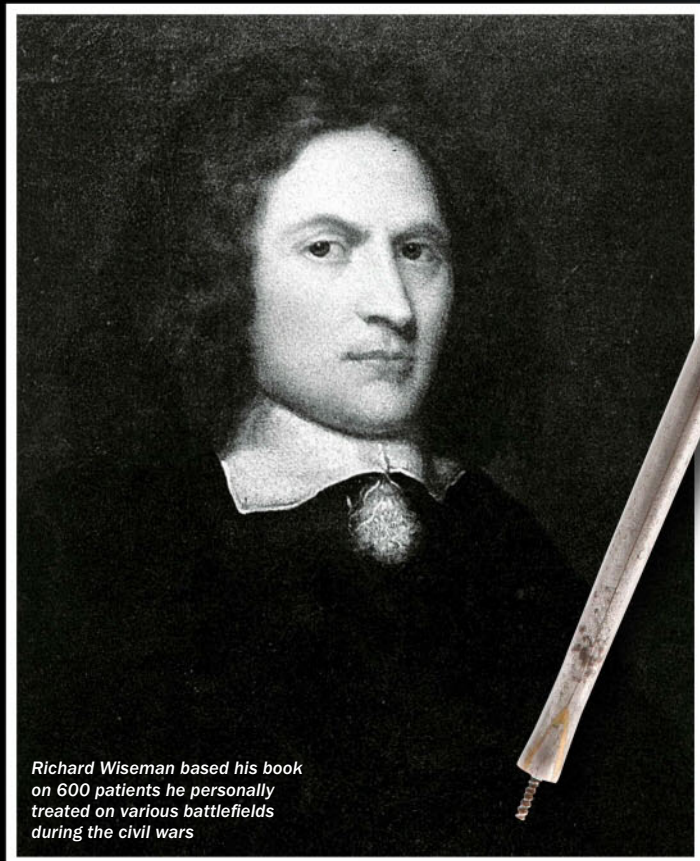
Designed to remove musket balls, the extractor was inserted into the wound and would follow the path of the ball until it was found. Once contact was made, the mechanism on the end of the extractor would be turned to screw into the soft lead of the ball, before being removed from the body.

Although the operation would have been excruciatingly painful, the extractor was a sign of medical improvements. Both sides in the Civil Wars used battlefield surgeons,

with Parliament instituting military hospitals in 1642, while the Royalists used men like Richard Wiseman to treat the wounded.

Wiseman had written a book called *A Treatise Of Wounds* and was an expert on gunshot injuries. He believed that bullets should be removed from a patient as quickly as possible and cautioned: "The part [wounded by gunshot] is at first dressing to be cleared with what diligence of all such foreign bodies has made violent intrusion into it." He also recommended that the patient should be operated on while the wound was fresh and "little altered by air or accidents." Although he would not have known it, Wiseman was practising methods that may have prevented bacterial infections caused by battlefield injuries.

Left: For its time, the bullet extractor was a visible symbol of medical progress and may have saved the lives of many wounded soldiers



Richard Wiseman based his book on 600 patients he personally treated on various battlefields during the civil wars

Right: Wounds inflicted by musketeers would have been a common occurrence during the British Civil Wars

**"ALTHOUGH THE OPERATION WOULD HAVE BEEN EXCRUCIATINGLY PAINFUL, THE EXTRACTOR WAS A SIGN OF MEDICAL IMPROVEMENTS"**

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